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To be returned

PHILIP VAN ARTEVELDE;

A

DRAMATIC ROMANCE.

IN TWO PARTS.

By HENRY TAYLOR, Esq.

"Dramatica Poesis est veluti Historia spectabilis."
Bacon de Augmentis.

PART I.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:
EDWARD MOXON, DOVER STREET.
MDCCCXXXIV.

LONDON:
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.
(LATE T. DAVISON.)

TO

ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ.

THIS Book, though it should travel far and wide
As ever unripe Author's quick conceit
Could feign his page dispers'd, should nowhere meet
A friendlier censor than by Greta's side,
A warmer welcome than at Skiddaw's feet.
Unhappily infrequent in the land
Is now the sage seclusion, the retreat
Sacred to letters: but let this command
Fitting acknowledgment,—that time and tide
Saw never yet embellished with more grace
Outward and inward, with more charms allied,
With honours more attended, man or place,
Than where by Greta's silver current sweet
Learning still keeps one calm sequestered seat.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO

THE SECOND EDITION.

In publishing a second edition of this work, the Author will not venture to trouble his readers with any comment upon the notices with which the first edition has been favoured, in so far as they are purely critical. But by more than one of the writers of those notices (to whom he is indebted for the indulgence with which they have regarded his work) he has been supposed to have made some of his dramatic delineations the vehicle of allusions to persons of distinction

now living. An accidental coincidence of names appears not unnaturally to have suggested the supposition; and he is desirous to say in this place, that no such allusions as those ascribed to him were in his thoughts when he wrote the passages in question.

The present edition differs from the first only in one or two trifling insertions, in the correction of some faults which have been pointed out in periodical publications, and in the alteration of a few lines here and there, made for the most part with a view to consolidate the rhythm.

LONDON, SEPTEMBER, 1834.

PREFACE.

As this work, consisting of two Plays and an Interlude, is equal in length to about six such plays as are adapted to representation, it is almost unnecessary to say that it was not intended for the stage. It is properly an Historical Romance, cast in a dramatic and rhythmical form. Historic truth is preserved in it, as far as the material events are concerned—of course with the usual exception of such occasional dilatations and compressions of time as are required in dramatic composition.

This is, perhaps, all the explanation which is absolutely required in this place; but, as there may be readers who feel an inclination to learn something of an author's tastes in poetry before they proceed to the perusal of what he has written, I will take the opportunity which a preface affords me of expressing my opinions upon two or three of the most prominent features in the present state of poetical literature; and I shall do so the more gladly, because I am apprehensive, that without some previous intimations of the kind, my work might occasion disappointment to the admirers of that highly coloured poetry which has been popular in these latter years. If in the strictures, which, with this object, I may be led to make upon authors of great reputation, I should appear to be wanting in the respect due to prevalent opinions,—opinions which, from the very circumstance of their prevalence, must be assumed to be partaken by many to whom deference is owing,—I trust that it will

be attributed, not to any spirit of dogmatism, far less to a love of disparagement; but simply to the desire of exercising, with a discreet freedom, that humble independence of judgment in matters of taste, which it is for the advantage of literature that every man of letters should maintain.

My views have not, in truth, been founded upon any predisposition to depreciate the popular poetry of the times. It will always produce a powerful impression upon very young readers, and I scarcely think that it can have been more admired by any than by myself, when I was included in that category. I have not ceased to admire this poetry in its degree; and the interlude which I have inserted between these plays will show, that, to a limited extent, I have been desirous even to cultivate and employ it: but I am unable to concur in opinion with those who would place it in the foremost ranks of the art: nor does it seem to have been capable of

sustaining itself quite firmly in the very high degree of public estimation in which it was held at its first appearance, and for some years afterwards. The poetical taste to which some of the popular poets of this century gave birth, appears at present to maintain a more unshaken dominion over the writers of poetry, than over its readers.

These poets were characterised by great sensibility and fervour, by a profusion of imagery, by force and beauty of language, and by a versification peculiarly easy and adroit, and abounding in that sort of melody, which, by its very obvious cadences, makes itself most pleasing to an unpractised ear. They exhibited, therefore, many of the most attractive graces and charms of poetry—its vital warmth not less than its external embellishments; and had not the admiration which they excited, tended to produce an indifference to higher, graver, and more various endowments, no one would have said that it was, in any evil sense, excessive. But from this un-

bounded indulgence in the mere luxuries of poetry, has there not ensued a want of adequate appreciation for its intellectual and immortal part? I confess, that such seems to me to have been both the actual and the natural result; and I can hardly believe the public taste to have been in a healthy state, whilst the most approved poetry of past times was almost unread. We may now, perhaps, be turning back to it; but it was not, as far as I can judge, till more than a quarter of a century had expired, that any signs of re-action could be discerned. Till then, the elder luminaries of our poetical literature were obscured, or little regarded; and we sate with dazzled eyes at a high festival of poetry, where, as at the funeral of Arvalan, the torch-light put out the star-light.

So keen was the sense of what the new poets possessed, that it never seemed to be felt that any thing was deficient in them. Yet their deficiences were not unimportant. They wanted,

in the first place, subject matter. A feeling came more easily to them than a reflection, and an image was always at hand when a thought was not forthcoming. Either they did not look upon mankind with observant eyes, or they did not feel it to be any part of their vocation to turn what they saw to account. It did not belong to poetry, in their apprehension, to thread the mazes of life in all its classes and under all its circumstances, common as well as romantic, and, seeing all things, to infer and to instruct: on the contrary, it was to stand aloof from every thing that is plain and true; to have little concern with what is rational or wise; it was to be, like music, a moving and enchanting art, acting upon the fancy, the affections, the passions, but scarcely connected with the exercise of the intellectual faculties. These writers had, indeed, adopted a tone of language which is hardly consistent with the state of mind in which a man makes use of his understanding. The

realities of nature, and the truths which they suggest, would have seemed cold and incongruous, if suffered to mix with the strains of impassioned sentiment and glowing imagery in which they poured themselves forth. Spirit was not to be debased by any union with matter, in their effusions; dwelling, as they did, in a region of poetical sentiment which did not permit them to walk upon the common earth, or to breathe the common air.

Writers, however, whose appeal is made so exclusively to the excitabilities of mankind, will not find it possible to work upon them continuously without a diminishing effect. Poetry of which sense is not the basis, though it may be excellent of its kind, will not long be reputed to be poetry of the highest order. It may move the feelings and charm the fancy; but failing to satisfy the understanding, it will not take permanent possession of the strong-holds of fame. Lord Byron, in giving the most admirable

example of this species of poetry, undoubtedly gave the strongest impulse to the appetite for it. Yet this impulse is losing its force, and even Lord Byron himself repudiated, in the latter years of his life, the poetical taste which he had espoused and propagated. The constitution of this writer's mind is not difficult to understand, and sufficiently explains the growth of his taste.

Had he united a philosophical intellect to his peculiarly poetical temperament, he would probably have been the greatest poet of his age. But no man can be a very great poet who is not also a great philosopher. Whatever Lord Byron's natural powers may have been, idleness and light reading, an early acquisition of popularity by the exercise of a single talent, and an absorbing and contracting self-love, confined the field of his operations within narrow limits. He was in knowledge merely a man of Belles-lettres; nor does he appear at any time to have betaken him-

self to such studies as would have tended to the cultivation and discipline of his reasoning powers, or the enlargement of his mind. He had, however, not only an ardent and brilliant imagination, but a clear understanding; and the signs both of what he had and of what he wanted, are apparent in his poetry. There is apparent in it a working and moulding spirit, with a want of material to work up,—a great command of language, with a want of any views or reflections which, if unembellished by imagery, or unassociated with passionate feelings, it would be very much worth while to express. Page after page throughout his earlier poems, there is the same uninformed energy at work upon the same old feelings; and when at last he became conscious that a theme was wanting, it was at a period of life when no man will consent to put himself to school; he could change his style and manner, but he could not change his moral and intellectual being, nor extend the sphere of his contem-

plations to subjects which were alien in *spirit* from those with which he had been hitherto, whether in life or in literature, exclusively conversant: in short, his mind was past the period of growth; there was (to use a phrase of Ben Jonson's) an *ingeni-stitium*, or wit-stand: he felt, apparently, that the food on which he had fed his mind had not been invigorating; but it could no longer bear a stronger diet, and he turned his genius loose to rove over the surface of society, content with such light observations upon life and manners as any acute man of the world might collect upon his travels, and conscious that he could recommend them to attention by such wit, brilliancy, dexterity of phrase, and versatility of fancy, as no one but himself could command.

His misanthropy was probably, like his tenderness, not practical, but merely matter of imagination, assumed for purposes of effect. But whilst his ignorance of the better elements

of human nature may be believed to have been in a great measure affected, it is not to be supposed that he knew of them with a large and appreciating knowledge. Yet that knowledge of human nature which is exclusive of what is good in it, is, to say the least, as shallow and imperfect as that which is exclusive of what is evil. There is no such thing as philosophical misanthropy; and if a misanthropical spirit, be it genuine or affected, be found to pervade a man's writings, that spirit may be poetical as far as it goes, but being at fault in its philosophy, it will never, in the long run of time, approve itself equal to the institution of a poetical fame of the highest and most durable order.

These imperfections are especially observable in the portraitures of human character (if such it can be called) which are most prominent in Lord Byron's works. There is nothing in them of the mixture and modification,—nothing of the composite fabric which Nature has assigned to Man.

They exhibit rather passions personified, than persons impassioned. But there is a yet worse defect in them. Lord Byron's conception of a hero is an evidence, not only of scanty materials of knowledge from which to construct the ideal of a human being, but also of a want of perception of what is great or noble in our nature. His heroes are creatures abandoned to their passions, and essentially, therefore, weak of mind. Strip them of the veil of mystery and the trappings of poetry, resolve them into their plain realities, and they are such beings as, in the eyes of a reader of masculine judgment, would certainly excite no sentiment of admiration, even if they did not provoke contempt. When the conduct and feelings attributed to them are reduced into prose, and brought to the test of a rational consideration, they must be perceived to be beings in whom there is no strength, except that of their intensely selfish passions,—in whom all is vanity; their exertions being for vanity under the name

of love, or revenge, and their sufferings for vanity under the name of pride. If such beings as these are to be regarded as heroical, where in human nature are we to look for what is low in sentiment, or infirm in character?

How nobly opposite to Lord Byron's ideal, was that conception of an heroical character which took life and immortality from the hand of Shakspeare:—

> "Give me that man
> That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
> In my heart's core; aye, in my heart of heart.

Lord Byron's genius, however, was powerful enough to cast a highly romantic colouring over these puerile creations, and to impart the charms of forcible expression, fervid feeling, and beautiful imagery, to thoughts in themselves not more remarkable for novelty than for soundness. The public required nothing more; and if he himself was brought latterly to a sense of his

deficiencies of knowledge and general intellectual cultivation, it must have been more by the effect of time in so far maturing his very vigorous understanding, than by any correction from without. No writer of his age has had less of the benefits of adverse criticism. His own judgment, and that of his readers, have been left equally without check or guidance; and the decline in popular estimation which he has suffered for these last few years, may be rather attributed to a satiated appetite on the part of the public, than to a rectified taste: for those who have ceased to admire his poetry so ardently as they did, do not appear in general to have transferred their admiration to any worthier object.

Nor can it be said that anything better, or indeed anything half so good, has been subsequently produced. The poetry of the day, whilst it is greatly inferior in quality, continues to be like his in kind. It consists of little more than a poetical diction, an arrangement of words

implying a sensitive state of mind, and therefore more or less calculated to excite corresponding associations, though, for the most part, not pertinently to any matter in hand; a diction which addresses itself to the sentient, not the percipient, properties of the mind, and displays merely symbols or types of feelings, which might exist with equal force in a being the most barren of understanding.

It may be proper, however, to take a distinction between the ordinary Byronian poetry, and that which may be considered as the offspring, either in the first or second generation, of the genius of Mr. Shelley. Mr. Shelley was a person of a more powerful and expansive imagination than Lord Byron, but he was inferior to him in those practical abilities, which (unacceptable as such an opinion may be to those who believe themselves to be writing under the guidance of inspiration) are essential to the production of consummate poetry. The editor

of Mr. Shelley's posthumous poems apologises for the publication of some fragments in a very incomplete state, by remarking how much "more than every other poet of the present day, every line and word he wrote is instinct with peculiar beauty." Let no man sit down to write with the purpose of making every line and word beautiful and peculiar. The only effect of such an endeavour will be to corrupt his judgment and confound his understanding. In Mr. Shelley's case, besides an endeavour of this kind, there seems to have been an attempt to unrealise every object in nature, presenting them under forms and combinations in which they are never to be seen through the mere medium of our eye-sight. Mr. Shelley seems to have written under the notion that no phenomena can be perfectly poetical, until they shall have been so decomposed from their natural order and coherency, as to be brought before the reader in the likeness of a phantasma or a vision. A poet is, in his estima-

tion, (if I may venture to infer his principles from his practice,) purely and pre-eminently a visionary. Much beauty, exceeding splendour of diction and imagery, cannot but be perceived in his poetry, as well as exquisite charms of versification; and a reader of an apprehensive fancy will doubtless be entranced whilst he reads: but when he shall have closed the volume, and considered within himself what it has added to his stock of permanent impressions, of recurring thoughts, of pregnant recollections, he will probably find his stores in this kind no more enriched by having read Mr. Shelley's poems, than by having gazed on so many gorgeously coloured clouds in an evening sky. Surpassingly beautiful they were whilst before his eyes; but forasmuch as they had no relevancy to his life, past or future, the impression upon the memory barely survived that upon the senses.

I would by no means wish to be understood

as saying that a poet can be too imaginative, provided that his other faculties be exercised in due proportion to his imagination. I would have no man depress his imagination, but I would have him raise his reason to be its equipoise. What I would be understood to oppugn, is the strange opinion which seems to prevail amongst certain of our writers and readers of poetry, that good sense stands in a species of antagonism to poetical genius, instead of being one of its most essential constituents. The maxim that a poet should be "of imagination all compact," is not, I think, to be adopted thus literally. That predominance of the imaginative faculty, or of impassioned temperament, which is incompatible with the attributes of a sound understanding and a just judgment, may make a rhapsodist, a melodist, or a visionary, each of whom may produce what may be admired for the particular talent and beauty belonging to it: but imagination and passion, thus unsupported, will never

make a poet, in the largest and highest sense of the appellation:—

> " For Poetry is Reason's self sublimed ;
> 'Tis Reason's sovereignty, whereunto
> All properties of sense, all dues of wit,
> All fancies, images, perceptions, passions,
> All intellectual ordinance grown up
> From accident, necessity, or custom,
> Seen to be good, and after made authentic ;
> All ordinance aforethought, that from science
> Doth prescience take, and from experience law ;
> All lights and institutes of digested knowledge,
> Gifts and endowments of intelligence
> From sources living, from the dead bequests,—
> Subserve and minister*."

Mr. Shelley and his disciples, however,—the followers (if I may so call them) of the PHANTASTIC SCHOOL, labour to effect a revolution in this order of things. They would transfer the domicile of poetry to regions where reason, far from having any supremacy or rule, is all but unknown, an alien and an outcast; to seats of

* MS.

anarchy and abstraction, where imagination exercises the shadow of an authority, over a people of phantoms, in a land of dreams.

In bringing these cursory criticisms to an end, I must beg leave to warn the reader against any expectation that he will find my work free either from the faults which I attribute to others, or from faults which may be worse, and more peculiarly my own. The actual works of men will not bear to be measured by their ideal standards in any case; and I may observe, in reference to my own, that my critical views have rather resulted from composition than directed it. If, however, I have been unable to avoid the errors which I condemn, or errors not less censurable, I trust that, on the other hand, I shall not be found to have deprived myself, by any narrowness or perversity of judgment, of the advantage which the study of these writers, exceptionable though they be, may undoubtedly afford to one who, whilst

duly taking note of their general defects, shall not have closed his mind to a perception of their particular excellences. I feel, and have already expressed, a most genuine, and I hope not an inadequate, admiration for the powers which they respectively possess; and wherever it might occur to me that the exercise of those powers would be appropriate and consistent, I should not fail to benefit by their example to the extent of my capabilities. To say, indeed, that I admire them, is to admit that I owe them much; for admiration is never thrown away upon the mind of him who feels it, except when it is misdirected or blindly indulged. There is perhaps nothing which more enlarges or enriches the mind, than the disposition to lay it genially open to impressions of pleasure from the exercise of every species of talent; nothing by which it is more impoverished than the habit of undue depreciation. What is puerile, pusillanimous,

or wicked, it can do us no good to admire; but let us admire all that can be admired without debasing the dispositions or stultifying the understanding.

London, Sept. 1834.

INTRODUCTION.

In the fourteenth century the Flemish towns were the most opulent and considerable in Europe; and of these, Ghent and Bruges were, in size, wealth and population, perhaps scarcely inferior even to Venice. They were of right subject to the Earl of Flanders, and, in ordinary times, he exercised by his bailiffs the powers of sovereignty in them: but they had secured various franchises and immunities, which they guarded with jealousy, and which, when need was, they rose in arms to defend. On such occasions they were seldom all joined in a league together; for the trading interests of several of them were in some respects opposite, and some would

generally remain subject to the Earl, and at war, therefore, with those which leagued against him.

These towns were not only asunder one from another, but each one was commonly divided by parties within itself. The towns consisted each of various crafts or guilds, as the weavers, the fullers, the clothiers, the mariners, &c. and some of these crafts were occasionally well affected towards the Earl, at the same time that others were disposed to rebellion. But the chief opposition was between the rich inhabitants and the poor. The rich wished for peace and repose; the poor were eager for war, which, in that age, when most men were warlike, was perhaps the best trade that a poor man could follow. When, therefore, any of these towns was in rebellion, there was generally a peace-faction within it, which rose or fell in importance according to the varying circumstances of military success or failure.

In the year 1381, the inhabitants of Bruges made themselves friends with Lois, Earl of Flanders, and under the countenance of his authority, which they

purchased, began to cut a channel which would have opened to them a direct communication with the river Lis, the navigation of which was otherwise only accessible to them by passing through Ghent. Ghent was, however, by no means willing to lose her exclusive possession or controul of the navigation up the Lis. Like the "*Crowning City*" of more ancient days, "*the harvest of the river was her revenue.*"

"There was at this time in Ghent a burgess called John Lyon, a sage man, cruel, hardy, subtle, and a great enterpriser, and cold and patient enough in all his works." This John Lyon (the Flemish name is Heins, but it is thus Englished,) was a dismissed officer of the Earl, and he took the opportunity of the discontent occasioned by the attempt of the people of Bruges supported by the Earl, to revive an old usage of Ghent, by which all the disaffected were accustomed to form themselves into a corps, distinguished by white hoods, and subordinated to one ruler. Such a corps was now formed, and John

Lyon, being chosen their chief, conducted a party of them to attack the pioneers from Bruges who were digging at the Lis. But the pioneers retreated, and desisted without fighting.

The professed object of forming the corps was accomplished therefore; "but notwithstanding that, John Lyon did not abandon his office, but the White-Hoods went daily up and down the town, and John Lyon kept them still in that state, and to some he would say secretly, 'hold you well content; eat and drink, and make merry, and be not concerned at any thing you spend; for hereafter such shall pay you as will not now give you one penny.'"

For men thus organised and thus disposed, a fresh cause of quarrel was easily to be found. "In the same week that John Lyon had been thus at Deinse, to have met with the pioneers of Bruges, there came many out of the Franc of Ghent, to complain to them that had then the rule of the law, and said, 'Sirs, at Erclo, near here, which is within the Franchise of Ghent, there is one of our burgesses in the Earl's prison, and we have desired the Earl's bailiff

there to deliver him; but he hath plainly answered that he will not deliver him, which is evidently against the privilege of this town of Ghent; and so thereby your privileges will be by degrees broken, which have hitherto been so nobly and so highly praised, and besides that, so well kept and maintained, that none durst break them, and that the most noble Knight of Flanders considered it an honour to be a burgess of Ghent.' Then they of the Law answered and said, that 'they would write to the bailiff desiring that the burgess may be delivered; for truly his office extendeth not so far as to keep our burgess in the Earl's prison.' And so they wrote to the bailiff for the deliverance of the burgess who was in prison in Erclo.—The bailiff answered, 'What needeth all these words for a mariner?' 'Say,' quoth the bailiff, who was named Roger d'Auterne, 'to them of Ghent, that though he were ten times richer than he is, he shall never go out of prison, unless my lord the Earl command it. I have power to arrest, but I have no power to deliver.'"

They of Ghent were ill content with this answer,

and complained loudly to the Earl, who agreed to release the prisoner, and redress their grievances, on condition that the White-Hoods should be disbanded. But John Lyon maintained that it was only by keeping up the White-Hoods that they would ever have any security for their privileges; and, in spite of all the Earl's remonstrances, the White-Hoods increased in number, and were formed into companies, with captains over them. The Earl then sent his bailiff to Ghent with two hundred men, to seize and execute John Lyon and other captains. This brought on an encounter in the market-place, where the bailiff was slain, and the Earl's banner torn in pieces by the White-Hoods.

Such was the beginning of a war, which continued for several years, between the Earl of Flanders and the town of Ghent, and in which the principal towns on the part of the Earl were Bruges, Oudenarde, Dendermonde, Lisle, and Tournay; and those on the part of Ghent were Damme, Ypres, Courtray, Grammont, Poperinguen, and Messines:—A war which in its progress extended to the whole of

Flanders, and excited a degree of interest in all the civilised countries of Europe, for which the cause must be sought in the state of European communities at the time. It was believed that entire success on the part of Ghent would bring on a general rising, almost throughout Christendom, of the Commonalty against the Feudal Lords and men of substance. The incorporation of the citizens of Paris, known by the name of "the Army with Mallets," was, according to the well-known chronicler of the period, "all by the example of them of Ghent." Nicholas le Flamand deterred them from pulling down the Louvre, by urging the expediency of waiting to see what success might attend the Flemish insurgents. At Rheims, Chalons on the Marne, at Orleans, Beauvoisin, the like designs were entertained. "The rebellion of the Jacquerie," says Froissart, "was never so terrible as this was likely to have been." Brabant, Burgundy, and the lower part of Germany, were in a dangerous condition; and in England Wat Tyler's rebellion was contempora-

neous, and not unconnected with what was going on in Flanders.

I have related, by way of introduction, the origin of the war,—not that the incidents in which it originated are immediately connected with those of my play, which opens at a later period, after the death of John Lyon; but because I have wished (as much as in so small a compass may be) to give those of my readers who may require it, a notion of the temper of mind which prevailed in Flanders towards the end of the fourteenth century.

PHILIP VAN ARTEVELDE.

PART I.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN OF GHENT.

PHILIP VAN ARTEVELDE.

PETER VAN DEN BOSCH
SIR GUY, LORD OF OCCO
PETER VAN NUITRE
FRANS ACKERMAN
Leaders of the White-Hoods.

VAN AESWYN, *Squire to Sir Guy of Occo.*

HENRY VAN DRONGELEN, *Page to Van Artevelde.*

FATHER JOHN OF HEDA, *a Monk, formerly Preceptor to Van Artevelde.*

VAN RYK
VAN MUCK
Deans of two of the crafts.

UKENHEIM, *a Citizen.*

SIR SIMON BETTE
SIR GUISEBERT GRUTT
MYK STEENSEL
Wealthy citizens.

MEN OF BRUGES.

THE EARL OF FLANDERS,
SIR WALTER D'ARLON,
GILBERT MATTHEW,
SIR ROBERT MARESCHAULT, AND OTHERS.

WOMEN.

ADRIANA VAN MERESTYN.
CLARA VAN ARTEVELDE, *Sister of Philip Van Artevelde.*

The SCENE is laid sometimes at GHENT, sometimes at BRUGES, or in its neighbourhood.

"No arts, no letters, no society,—and which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death, and the life of Man solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."

LEVIATHAN, Part I. c. 18.

PHILIP VAN ARTEVELDE.

Part the First.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

A STREET IN THE SUBURBS OF GHENT.

The LORD OF OCCO, *meeting* SIR SIMON BETTE *and* SIR GUISEBERT GRUTT.

OCCO.

Sir Guisebert Grutt, and, by my faith, I think
Sir Simon Bette too. Pray you pardon me;
I thought that you were sped upon your mission
To treat for peace at Bruges.

SIR SIMON BETTE.

Sir, in good time.

We'd have a word with you before we go.
You are a noble born, my Lord of Occo;
And let me tell you, many marvel much
To find a gentleman of so great worth
A flatterer of the Commons.

SIR GUISEBERT GRUTT.

Yea, my lord,
It looks not well when nobles fall away
One from another. That the small-crafts here
Should lift their hands against their natural lord,
Is but the plague and sorrow of the time,
Which we, that are of credit, must abide:
But ne'er till now a gentleman of name
Was found amongst their leaders.

OCCO.

Oh, dear sirs,
I could remind you how your sometime selves
Bore less goodwill towards the Earl's affairs
Than spurs your errand now; and if to you
Pardon be promised, I would fain be told,
Why not to me as well.

SIR GUISEBERT GRUTT.

Truly, why not?

To whoso merits it 'twill freely fall;
So give us leave to make a good report
Of how you stand affected. 'Twere your wisdom.

OCCO.

Kind sirs, I thank you; you shall say, so please you,
That I am not of them that evermore
Cry out for war, and having not a hope
Of the Earl's mercy, act as desperate men;
For were I sure the multitude met pity
It would not then behove me to stand out
For my particular ransom,—though, to say truth,
The Earl should do himself but little service
Were he to deal too hardly with us all.

SIR SIMON BETTE.

'Tis fairly spoken, sir. When we come back,
Bringing conditions with us as we trust,
We'll look for aid from you amongst the Commons.
For truly there are here a sort of crafts
So factious still for war, and obstinate,
That we shall be endangered. Suing for peace
Is ever treason to the White-Hoods. Well,
We'll look for your support.

OCCO.

God speed you, sirs.
To fair conditions you shall find me friendly.

[*Exeunt* SIR SIMON BETTE, *and* SIR GUISEBERT GRUTT. VAN AESWYN *comes forward.*

VAN AESWYN.

My lord, were those that parted from you here
The worshipful negociators?

OCCO.

Aye!
Would they had passed the windmills—how they crawl!—
And met no babbling burghers on their way.

VAN AESWYN.

What! you have made an overture?

OCCO.

Not so:
I've flung my line, and yonder pair of hooks
Are aptly baited to ensure me one;
But compromised I am not,—no, nor will be,
Till it be seen if yet my suit may thrive
With yon fair frozen dew-drop, all that's left
To represent Van Merestyn's hot blood.

VAN AESWYN.

'Tis said she is but backwardly inclined
To any of her swains.

OCCO.

Such wealth as hers
Makes a maid whimsical and hard to please.
She that can have her will, be what it may,
Is much to seek to settle what it shall be.
The damsel must be tried; for if she yield,
The charier must I be, whilst times permit,
Of the good town's goodwill. Her lands lie all
Within the Franc of Ghent. Send Berckel to her,
And bid him say I wait upon her leisure.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

THE HOUSE VAN MERESTYN.

ADRIANA VAN MERESTYN, *and* CLARA VAN ARTEVELDE.

CLARA.

I do not bid thee take him or refuse him;
I only say, think twice.

ADRIANA.

But once to think
Is once too much upon a theme like this,
When the heart speaks.

CLARA.

Truly, but yours says 'yes.'

ADRIANA.

Most absolutely, 'no.'

CLARA.

If so to him,
Be sure that inwardly it proffers 'yes'
To some one else.

ADRIANA.

I'd take my heart to task,
If ever it should be so wanton-bold.

CLARA.

You'd frown upon it grimly, and would say
'Speak when you're spoken to.' 'Tis easy said.
I can remember, when a child, my nurse
Would whip me for not sleeping; but alas!
I never slept the more for being whipped.
Well; answer what you will; no, yes—yes, no;
Either or both; I would the chance were mine;
I say no more; I would it were my lot
To have a lover.

ADRIANA.

Yours? why there's Sir Walter.

CLARA.

Sir Walter? very good; but he's at Bruges.
I want one here.

ADRIANA.

On days of truce he comes.

CLARA.

I want one every day. Besides the war
Will never slacken now; a truce to truces.

And though on moonless, cloud-encompassed nights,
He will, in his discretion, truce or none,
Hazard a trip, yet should he be discovered,
Mild Van den Bosch would pat him on the head,
And then he'd come no more.

ADRIANA.

I pity him,
To have in chase so wild a heart as thine.

CLARA.

I cannot but believe I have two hearts.
Here is a little one upon the left,
And that I gave to D'Arlon; then there's.....no,
What is it that lies here?

ADRIANA.

'Tis hollowness.

CLARA.

Just Heaven! But we are wasting time; think well
What you should say; for if it must be 'no'
In substance, you shall hardly find that form
Which shall convey it pleasantly.

ADRIANA.

In truth,
To mould denial to a pleasing shape

In all things, and most specially in love,
Is a hard task; alas! I have not wit
From such a sharp and waspish word as 'no'
To pluck the sting. What think you I should say?

CLARA.

A colourable thing or two; as thus:
My lord, we women swim not with our hearts,
Nor yet our judgments, but the world's opinions;
And though I prize you dearly in my soul,
And think you of all excellence compounded,
Yet 'tis a serious and unhappy thing
To hear you spoken of: for men protest
That you are cruel, cowardly, and false,
Boastful, malicious; that your wit is craft,
Your love is lust, devotion misbelief,
Your merriment unseemly, sadness sour;
Your joys of others' miseries engendered,
Your misery of their joys; your business wicked,
Your leisure lewd, your kindness cold, hate hot;
Your riches (which are plunder) spent in pride,
Your favour got by fawning, your ill-will
Bestowed on worth, your injuries on your betters;
That envy's entrails are your daily food;

That scorn (which masks your fear) of what is wise,
Noble, and honest, is your breath of life,
Detraction your fifth element.

ADRIANA.

No more?
Am I to use no courtesies but these?

CLARA.

Oh mercy, yes! To cut him off so short
Should give him dudgeon: stop, where was I? ah!—
This for your mind's repute. Then for your person,
(Which for my own particular I love)
'Tis said that you are strangely ill to look at;
That your blank eyes are borrowed of a fish,
Your eyebrows bald, your stony forehead low,
Your hair the colour of a dirty blanket;
And for your bleak complexion, they aver
It comes of coldness of your blood; your nose,
They say, is built on spandrils, and upturned
With an unmannerly and flaunting scoff
At neighbour mouth, only because his air
Is homely and uncouth, and that he's grown,
Through a continual bandying of big words,
More sizeable than comely; for your beard

They vow 'tis like your cook, that fattened is
With sundry sops that should have reached your stomach:
All which imaginations, good my lord,
Grossly as they may counterfeit defect
Where merit most abounds, are yet so clenched
With cramps and dovetails in the minds of men,
That in despite of that so high esteem
In which I hold you, and against my will,
I am constrained to say your lordship's scullion
Should sooner be my husband than yourself.

ADRIANA.

Thanks for your counsel; an auspicious scheme
Is this of yours for easing off his pride,
And scattering a veil of spangled words
Upon the faults that move me to reject him.
But look! Is this—no, 'tis your brother's page.

CLARA.

All hail to him! he is my daily sport.
Of all things under heaven that make me merry,
It makes me merriest to see a boy
That wants to be a man.

ADRIANA.

His want fulfilled,

He will not be the worse; 'tis well for them
That have no faults but what they needs must leave.

Enter the PAGE.

CLARA.

How now, Sir Henry! whither away, brave knight?

PAGE.

I'm coming but to pay my duty here;
The Lady Adriana lets me come.

CLARA.

I wish thy master knew it.

PAGE.

So he does;
He tells me to come too.

CLARA.

Alas, poor man!
Hath he no eyes?

PAGE.

What mean you, Mistress Clara?

CLARA.

Why, when our pages steal away our loves,
Tell gardeners to keep blackbirds. Look you here—

Look on this drooping melancholy maid;
What hast thou done?

PAGE.

Who, I? it was not I.

CLARA.

Who was it then? Well—'kissing goes by favour'—
So saith the proverb; truly, more's the pity!
Yet I commend your prudence, Adriana,
For favouring this pure and pretty child,
In place of that so rude and graceless monster
That takes the name of man. I'll learn from you;
And if, when I have kissed my pug and parrot,
I have the matter of a mouthful left,
For fear of waste that's worse I'll spend them here.

PAGE.

I would advise you to be more discreet.

CLARA.

Soho! and wherefore? Oh! so old you are!
Full fifteen summers older than your beard,
And that was born last week—before its time.
I told you, Adriana, did I not,
Of the untimely birth? It chanced o' Wednesday,
By reason of a fright he gave his chin,

Making its innocent down to stand on end
With brandishing of a most superfluous razor.

ADRIANA.

You told me no such tale; and if you had,
I should not have believed you; for your tongue
Was ever nimbler in the track of sport
Than fits for hunting in a leash with truth.
Heed her not, Henry, she is full of slanders.

CLARA.

Truth is an honest mastiff, thorough-bred;
I am a mongrel, coming of a cross
'Twixt cur and greyhound; so I snack and run.
But is it slander to impute to folk
More youthhead than they have? If so it be,
How many a dame, that if to live and learn
Were of one stock and bearing, should know better,
Slanders herself. I said but he was young.

PAGE.

I am almost as old as you.

CLARA.

I grant thee;
But we are women when boys are but boys.
God gives us grace to ripen and grow wise

Some two years earlier. I thank heaven for it;
We grow upon the sunny side o' the wall.

PAGE.

Methinks your wisdom grows o' the windy side,
And bears but little fruit.

CLARA.

What! saucy grown!
It bears more fruit than thou hast wit to steal,
Or stomach to digest. Were I thy tutor,
To teach thee wisdom, and beheld such store
Of goodly fruitage, I should say to thee,
'Rob me this orchard.' Then wouldst thou reply,
'Five feet three inches stand I in my shoes,
And yet I cannot reach to pluck these plums,
So loftily they flourish!'. Look, look, look!
Here comes the knight upon an ambling nag.
Now, Adriana!

ADRIANA.

I am sore perplexed.
What shall I say?

CLARA.

My counsel you have heard,
And partly slighted, wherefore seek to better;

Take we direction from our full-grown friend.
Sir Henry, one will presently be here
Who, 'tis suspected from his late demeanour,
Will ask our Adriana's hand in marriage.
What shall she answer?

PAGE.

She shall answer 'no.'

CLARA.

Suppose her wishful so to say, what cause
Should she assign?

PAGE.

Her wish is cause enough.

CLARA.

'Tis cause enough to pages when they're kissed,
But knights that be rejected should be soothed
With courteous phrase.

PAGE.

Then let her say—'My lord,
You are the flower of Flemish chivalry,
But I have vow'd to live and die a maid.'

CLARA.

A goodly vow, God give her grace to make it,
An' it be not too troublesome to keep.

But he's no more the flower of Flemish knights,
Than thou the pearl of pages. Adriana,
Bethink you well what answer you shall make,
Lest he surprise you and you tell the truth.

ADRIANA.

Prithee, what truth? There's nothing to be hidden.

CLARA.

There's nothing can from Clara. But enough;
I'll touch that topic after; the knight comes.

Enter THE LORD OF OCCO.

OCCO.

Fairest of ladies! an unworthy knight
Does homage to your beauty.

ADRIANA.

Good, my lord,
I am beholden to your courtesy,
That gives to this poor semblance such a name.
But here is one by whose associate charms
And kindly converse I am brightened ever.
Let me make known to you, my Lord of Occo,
A daughter of the House of Artevelde.

OCCO.

Fair damsel, I am happy in the fortune
Which shines upon me from two spheres at once.

CLARA.

Fair sir, I thank you for your courtesy.
No lady lives in Ghent with ears to hear,
Who has not heard recounted night and day
The exploits of Lord Occo.

OCCO.

On my soul,
I blush to hear it said; though true it is,
I have performed what little in me lay
To bring renown to Flemish chivalry.
I give to God the glory; and, next him,
'Tis due to her whose charms would kindle valour
In the most coldest heart of Christendom.
Inspir'd by her, I could not choose but conquer.

CLARA.

Whoe'er inspir'd your valour, your exploits
Must give that lady high pre-eminence.
Three hundred men at arms, I think it was,
You freely fell upon with sword in hand,
After the storming of the Fort at Sas,
And not a soul surviv'd.

OCCO.

Your pardon, lady;
Some other trifle's in your thoughts; at Sas
There is no fort, and they who perish'd there
Were but three hundred peasants, who were burned
By firing of a barn to which they'd fled.

CLARA.

Ah, was it so? At Zeveren then surely—

OCCO.

What happen'd there too was of no account.

CLARA.

Oh, pardon me; the modesty which still
Accompanies true valour, casts in shade
Your noble actions. I beseech you tell
What came to pass at Zeveren.

OCCO.

The town
Was taken by surprise.

CLARA.

Aye, true, and then
The garrison, that made themselves so strong
Within the convent's walls—

OCCO.

At Zeveren

There was no garrison.

CLARA.

You say not so?

How false is Fame! I'm certain I was told

Of a great slaughter in the convent there.

OCCO.

True; a proportion of the sisterhood

At Zeveren were unfortunate; but most

Suffer'd no more than loss of what in truth

Was but the shadow of a fair possession.

There's many an inconvenient concealment,

And many an open scandal has been spared,

Upon the plea of that which happen'd then.

Trust me, the sisters thank'd us in their hearts

For saving of their honours.

ADRIANA.

They that died

May have been thankful: let us hope they were.

CLARA.

At Lichtenvelde, my lord, you triumph'd too,

If I mistake not.

OCCO.

Lady, by your leave,
We'll treat of other things. Haply you know not
The usages of war, and scarce approve
Proceedings which its hard necessities
Will oft-times force upon us warriors.
A softer theme were meeter, and there's one
On which I burn to speak.

CLARA.

Alack, alack!
Then I am gone; soft speeches please mine ear,
As do soft pillows—when I fain would sleep.
But what's the time of day? Come hither, Henry,
We walk by high examples in this world;
Let's to the poultry-yard and win our spurs.
Give you good day, my lord.

[*Exeunt* CLARA *and* PAGE.

OCCO.

A merry lady
Your friend appears; but now that she is gone,
I must entreat your hearing for a word
Of graver import—grave, if aught imports
The life or death of this poor heart of mine.

A burning fiery furnace is this heart,
Wherein thine image only, like a charm,
For ever, evermore remains consuming,
And ever unconsumed! That wastes my life,
Which with a word from thee would make earth heaven,
And I must soon be nothing or a god!
There's an unutterable want and void,
A gulf, a craving, and a sucking in,
As when a mighty ship goes down at sea.
I roam about with hunger-bitten heart,
A famine in my bosom—a dry heat,
A desperate thirst, and I must glut it now,
Or like a dog by summer solstice parch'd
I shall go mad.

ADRIANA.

Oh no, my lord; or you deceive yourself,
Or else you flatter me. Yes, I know well
How much you all are practis'd in love lore,
And how knights' tongues are ready with such phrase,
For any simple maid they wish to please.

OCCO.

On my salvation, what I speak I feel.
Mine is no rhapsody of ready words.

Put this white hand upon this barred door,
At which my heart is knocking. Loud and fast
It knocks—shut up within a house on fire.
Then tell me, doth not this avouch the truth
Of the great love I swear?

ADRIANA.

Oh! pardon me,
I will not prove it further; I'll but say
It irks me that I cannot be so grateful
As you may think I ought.

OCCO.

Nay, lady, nay:
Deem that I've been tormented long enough,
And let this coyness have a timely end.

ADRIANA.

I am not coy, my lord; and since at last
You've spoken out, my speech shall be as free.
I thank you for your kindness and good-will,
But cannot be your wife.

OCCO.

Ah! say not so,
Or I shall wish that you'd been coy for ever.
I'll not believe it. Ah! 'twere death to think it!

ADRIANA.

My lord, there's many a worthier than I
Who would console you, if you needed solace;
But for my love, I should but do you wrong
If I should lead you further on the quest.

OCCO.

It cannot be your nature is unloving;
You will not tell me that?

ADRIANA.

I've told you all
Which it can profit you to know.

OCCO.

Ah! now
I see it clearly; there's some smooth-tongued knave
Has been before me,—yea, some wheedling minion,
With song and dance, and lute, and lily hands,
Has wriggled into favour, I the while
Fighting hard battles to my neck in blood.
Tell me in honesty if this be sooth;
If it be not, in charity say no.

ADRIANA.

In charity I never will speak more
With you, Sir Guy of Occo.
Nor till I see a sign of gentle blood,

Or knightly courtesy in one so bold,
Will I again hold converse, or with him,
Or any that abets him. This to me! [*Exit.*

OCCO.

Thanks, gentle lady! Thanks, kind, loving soul!
I am instructed; there came out the truth;
Those flashing eyes could hold it in no longer.
They are as plain to read as are the stars
To him who knows their signs. Would that I knew
The name of him who thrusts himself between us,
And what star rules him in the house of life!
Who rides this way, and waves that long salute?
Philip Van Artevelde, as I'm a knight!
Then no more need I knowledge of the stars. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.

THE STADT-HOUSE.

Enter MYK STEENSEL, *followed by several* BURGHERS.

STEENSEL.

And who is Van den Bosch, resolve me that:
I say, sirs, who is he to lay on taxes?

FIRST BURGHER.

Or Ackerman, or Launoy, who are they?

STEENSEL.

I say, sirs, if our goods be not our own,
Better our natural liege lord should have them
Than thus to render them to John or Peter.

SECOND BURGHER.

Why look you, sirs, our case stands simply here.
The earl of Flanders is a valiant lord,
And was a gracious master, till the Devil,
Who never sleeps, awakened them of Bruges
To dig about the Lis to turn the water.
But what, sirs,—we have fought enough for that.

STEENSEL.

Why, still the more we fight the more we lose,
For every battle that our White-Hoods win
But gives a warrant to this Van den Bosch
To spoil us of our substance.——Welcome, sirs.

Enter two DEANS *of the* CRAFTS.

FIRST DEAN.

Friends, have ye heard the news?

STEENSEL.

I know not, sir;

If the news be, we owe the White-Hoods pay
For giving us a hosier for our liege,—
'Tis old, sir, old.

SECOND DEAN.

No, this is what you'll owe them;
A ready market for your rats and mice.
Corn is already risen cent per cent,
Though many question if the news be true.
Our John of Launoy's slain, with all his men,
And the earl's troops possess the Quatre-Metiers.

STEENSEL.

There's a fair end to our supplies from Brabant.
But how came this to pass?

SECOND DEAN.

'Twas briefly thus:
Beside Nivelle the earl and Launoy met.
Six thousand voices shouted with the last
'Ghent the good Town! Ghent and the Chaperons Blancs!'
But from that force thrice-told there came the cry
Of 'Flanders, with the Lion of the Bastard!'
So then the battle joined, and they of Ghent
Gave back and opened after three hours' fight;
And hardly flying had they gained Nivelle,
When the earl's vanguard came upon their rear

Ere they could close the gate, and entered with them.
Then all were slain save Launoy and his guard,
Who, barricaded in the minster tower,
Made desperate resistance, whereupon
The earl waxed wrothful and bade fire the church.

FIRST BURGHER.

Say'st thou? Oh sacrilege accursed! Was't done?

SECOND DEAN.

'Twas done,—and presently was heard a yell,
And after that the rushing of the flames!
Then Launoy from the steeple cried aloud
'A ransom!' and held up his coat to sight
With florins filled, but they without but laugh'd
And mock'd him, saying, 'Come amongst us, John,
And we will give thee welcome';—make a leap—
Come out at window, John.'—With that the flames
Rose up and reached him, and he drew his sword,
Cast his rich coat behind him in the fire,
And shouting 'Ghent, ye slaves!' leapt freely forth,
When they below received him on their spears.
And so died John of Launoy.

FIRST BURGHER.

A brave end.
'Tis certain we must now make peace betimes;

The city will be starved else—Will be, said I?
Starvation is upon us: want and woe
Stand round about and stare us in the face;
And what will be the end?

STEENSEL.

Believe me, sirs,
So long as Van den Bosch bears rule in Ghent
You'll not have peace, for well wots he no terms
That spare his life will pacify the earl.
Sirs, if we make no peace but with the will
Of them whose heads must answer it, woe to us!
For we must fight for ever; sirs, I say,
We must put down this Van den Bosch, and up
The men that with the earl stand fair and free,
Who shall take counsel for the city's weal.

BURGHERS.

Truly we must.

STEENSEL.

Then friends, stand fast by me,
And as we're all agreed to give no denier
Of this five hundred marks, I will speak out,
And let him know our minds.

Enter VAN DEN BOSCH *and* THE LORD OF OCCO, *with a retinue of* WHITE-HOODS.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

Good morrow, worthy friends, good morrow, all!
'Tis a sweet sight to look on, in these times,
A score of true and trusty friends to Ghent
So fresh and hearty, and so well provided.
Ah, sirs, you know not, you, who lies afield
When nights are cold, with frogs for bed-fellows;
You know not, you, who fights and sheds his blood,
And fasts, and fills his belly with the east wind!
Poor souls and virtuous citizens they are!
'Tis they that keep the franchises of Ghent.
But what! they must be fed; they must have meat!
Sirs, have ye brought me these five hundred marks
That they demanded?

STEENSEL.

Master Van den Bosch,
Look round about; as many as stand here
Are of one mind, and this is what they think:
The company of White-Hoods, some time past,

Were, as thou say'st, brave citizens and true,
And they fought stoutly for our franchises;
But they were afterward as beasts of prey,
That, tasting blood, grow greedy and break loose,
And turn upon their keepers: so at length,
The city, like a camp in mutiny,
Saw nothing else to walk her streets unharm'd
But these your free-companions. They at will
Enter'd our houses, lived upon our means
In riotry, made plunder of our goods,
Lay with our wives and daughters; and if once
Some hardy fool made bold to lift his hand
For safeguard of his own, he met his death.
Now this we have resolved to bear no longer,
Nor will we give our substance so to feed
The lewd excesses of your company.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

How now, Myk Steensel! thou art bold of tongue;
I marvel thou shouldst speak so like a traitor
In presence of such honest, virtuous men,
As these thou seest about me. How can I,
Think you, give warranty that some good soul,
Inflam'd with anger at thy foolish speech,

May not cut out thy tongue and slit thy nose
For uttering of such treasons—how, indeed?

STEENSEL.

Thou think'st by this to hound thy pack upon me;
But know, thy reign is o'er, and I defy thee.
Thy brother Launoy with his men-at-arms
Will never answer to thy bidding more;
And if thou dare do violence to me,
Thou shalt be fain to take as long a leap
As his was at Nivelle.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

Oh, ho! my masters!
'Tis this then that emboldens you, this tale
Brought by a lying slave who ran away
Before the fight began, and calls it lost,
That so his cowardice should stand excused;
For which his false report and foul desertion
I have already had him gibbetted.
Bring not yourselves, I pray ye, for your honours,
With the like nimbleness to a grave i' the air.
I say, sirs, bring me these five-hundred marks,
And that or ere to-morrow's sun go down—
Five-hundred marks—I'll bate you not a scute;

Ye slothful, hide-blown, gormandising niggards!
What! all must starve but you, that lie a-bed,
And lack a day of fast to purge your grossness.
What, know ye who I am? Are ye awake?
Or sleeping off the wine of yesternight,
And deeming this some tustle with your wives
For pulling of a blanket here or there.
Five hundred marks—begone, and bring the money.

STEENSEL.

Begone we will. Let's to our homes, my friends.
And what we'll bring thee, thou shalt know betimes,
Nor wait the setting of to-morrow's sun.
Not gold, sir, no, nor silver, be thou sure,
But what shall best befit a brave man's hand.

[*Exeunt* STEENSEL *and the* BURGHERS; *manent* VAN DEN BOSCH *and* OCCO.

Thou see'st, sir, how the knaves take heart and rail
On this mishap.

OCCO.

I saw both that and more;
Our White-Hoods looked like very renegades,
As though they knew not which to fear the most,

Thy rod and gallows-tree, or the earl's bailiff.
Trust me, we're falling fast to pieces, Peter.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

My lord of Occo, thou hast seen aright.
But what can I? Our chiefs drop, one by one;
Launoy, too truly, perish'd at Nivelle;
Le Clerc lies leaning up against a hedge
('Till some one dare go bury him), at Chem;
Thy cousin fell with Launoy. Now, Van Harsells
And Ackerman are good for men at arms,
But want the wit to govern a great town.
And I am good at arms, and want not wit,
But then I'm sore suspected of the rich,
By reason of my rudeness, and the fruit
Which that same gallows-tree of mine hath borne;
And to say truth, although my wit be good,
It hath a fitter range without the gates,
In ordering an enterprise, than here.
The city leans to peace for lack of leading,
And we must put a head upon its shoulders.

OCCO.

Hast thou bethought thee of a man that's wise,
And fit to bear this rule?

VAN DEN BOSCH.

Why, there be such;
Though one that's wise would scarce be wise to take it.

OCCO.

There is no game so desperate which wise men
Will not take freely up for love of power;
Or love of fame, or merely love of play.
These men are wise, and then reputed wise,
And so their great repute of wisdom grows,
'Till for great wisdom a great price is bid,
And then their wisdom do they part withal:
Such men must still be tempted with high stakes,—
Philip van Artevelde is such a man.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

That is well thought of. Let us try him then.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

THE HOUSE VAN MERESTYN.

ADRIANA VAN MERESTYN, *and* CLARA VAN ARTEVELDE.

CLARA.

So you've dismissed the Lord of Occo.

ADRIANA.

Yes.

CLARA.

How many suitors have you discharged this morning?

ADRIANA.

How many?

CLARA.

Yes. Was not my brother Philip here?

ADRIANA.

He saw me through the lattice, and stayed his horse an instant under the window.

CLARA.

Was that all?

ADRIANA.

Yes—no—yes—I suppose so.

CLARA.

Oh! that maids would learn to speak the truth, or else to lie becomingly!

ADRIANA.

Do *I* not lie becomingly?—Well, 'tis want of use that ruins me. What should I say?

CLARA.

What say! Had my sworn friend so questioned me,
And I been minded, maugre our sworn friendship,
To coil my thoughts up in my secret self,
I with a brave and careless hardihood
Had graced the disavowal of my love.

ADRIANA.

But did I say I lov'd him not? Oh, God!
If I said that, I say since truth was truth,
There never was a falsehood half so false.
I say I love him, and I say beside,
That but to say I love him is as nothing;
'Tis but a tithe and scantling of the truth!
And oh! how much I love him, what can tell?
Not words, not tears—heaven only knows how much;
And every evening when I say my prayers,
I pray to be forgiven for the sin
Of loving aught on earth with such a love.

CLARA.

Well, God forgive you! for you answer now
Like a true maid and honest, though a sinning.
But tell me, if that's mentioned in your prayers,
For how much love has *he* to be forgiven?

ADRIANA.

Alas! I know not.

CLARA.

Nay, but you can guess.

ADRIANA.

Oh! I have guess'd a thousand times too oft.
And sometimes I am hopeful as the spring,
And up my fluttering heart is borne aloft
As high and gladsome as the lark at sunrise;
And then, as though the fowler's arrow pierced it,
It comes plumb down with such a dead, dead fall.

CLARA.

And all the while is he, I nothing doubt,
As wayward and as love-sick as yourself.

ADRIANA.

He love-sick! No—it may be that he loves me;
But if he does, it is with no love-sickness.
His nerves are made of other cord than mine;
He saunters undisturb'd along the Lis,

For ever angling as he used to do.
And when he told me he must come to-night,
And that he then would lay a burden down,
Which he had borne in silence all-too-long,
His voice was strong and steady, calm and clear,
So that I doubted if it could be love
That then was in his thoughts.

CLARA.

Oh! much the doubt!
But this was what I knew had come to pass,
When, answering with your vacant no and yes,
You fed upon your thoughts, and mark'd me not.

ADRIANA.

But think you that it really must be love
He comes to speak of?

CLARA.

Why, 'tis either that,
Or else to tell you of what fish he caught.

ADRIANA.

Oh, do not tease me; for my heart is faint,
With over-fulness of its expectations.

CLARA.

Oh! if your love's so lamentable sick,
Nurse it yourself; I'll go.

ADRIANA.

With all my heart.
You're too light-headed for my company.

CLARA.

Is it with all your heart? then I'll not go;
Or else I'll take you with me. Come along;
Your bower lacks tendance; it is strewn with leaves;
The autumn winds have broken in, alas!
And many a flower is hanging down its head
Since the rude kissing of those wild intruders.
Come, come with me; the dew is on the grass,
And at this merry pace, an inch an hour,
We'll chase the snails that pass us by like lightning.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.

THE HOUSE VAN ARTEVELDE.

PHILIP VAN ARTEVELDE, *and* FATHER JOHN OF HEDA.

ARTEVELDE.

I never looked that he should live so long.

He was a man of that unsleeping spirit,
He seemed to live by miracle: his food
Was glory, which was poison to his mind,
And peril to his body. He was one
Of many thousand such that die betimes,
Whose story is a fragment, known to few.
Then comes the man who has the luck to live,
And he's a prodigy. Compute the chances,
And deem there's ne'er a one in dangerous times
Who wins the race of glory, but than him
A thousand men more gloriously endowed
Have fallen upon the course; a thousand others
Have had their fortunes foundered by a chance,
Whilst lighter barks pushed past them; to whom add
A smaller tally, of the singular few,
Who, gifted with predominating powers,
Bear yet a temperate will and keep the peace.
The world knows nothing of its greatest men.

FATHER JOHN.

Had Launoy lived he might have passed for great,
But not by conquests in the Franc of Bruges.
The sphere, the scale of circumstance, is all
Which makes the wonder of the many. Still
An ardent soul was Launoy's, and his deeds

Were such as dazzled many a Flemish dame.
There'll some bright eyes in Ghent be dimmed for him.

ARTEVELDE.

They will be dim and then be bright again.
All is in busy, stirring, stormy motion,
And many a cloud drifts by, and none sojourns.
Lightly is life laid down amongst us now,
And lightly is death mourn'd: a dusk star blinks
As fleets the rack, but look again, and lo!
In a wide solitude of wintry sky
Twinkles the re-illuminated star,
And all is out of sight that smirch'd the ray.
We have not time to mourn.

FATHER JOHN.

The worse for us!
He that lacks time to mourn, lacks time to mend.
Eternity mourns that. 'Tis an ill cure
For life's worst ills, to have no time to feel them.
Where sorrow's held intrusive and turned out,
There wisdom will not enter, nor true power,
Nor aught that dignifies humanity.
Yet such the barrenness of busy life!
From shelf to shelf Ambition clambers up,
To reach the naked'st pinnacle of all,

Whilst Magnanimity, absolved from toil,
Reposes self-included at the base.
But this thou know'st.

ARTEVELDE.

Else had I little learn'd
From my much learn'd preceptor.

Enter THE PAGE.

What, Sir Page!
Hast thou been idling in the market-place?
Canst tell whose chattels have been sold to-day
For payment of the White-Hoods?

PAGE.

Sir, I cannot;
I've been at Dame Van Merestyn's.

ARTEVELDE.

Ha, there!
Well, and what said the dame?

PAGE.

She was abroad;
I saw the Lady Adriana.

ARTEVELDE.

Her!
Well, and what said the damsel?

PAGE.

Sir, not much;
For mistress Clara was her visiter,
And she said every thing; she said it all.

ARTEVELDE.

What was the topic?

PAGE.

After I came in
The talk was all of chivalry and love.
And presently arrived the Lord of Occo.

ARTEVELDE.

And what was talk'd of then?

PAGE.

Oh! still the same.
The ladies praised him mightily for deeds,
Whose fame, they said, effulgent far and wide,
Eclipsed Sir Roland and Sir Oliver.

ARTEVELDE.

Now Father, mark you that; hearts soft as wax
These damsels would be thought to bear about,
Yet ever is the bloodiest knight the best!

FATHER JOHN.

It is most true. Full many a dame I've known
Who'd faint and sicken at the sight of blood,

And shriek and wring her hands, and rend her hair,
To see her lord brought wounded to the door;
And many a one I've known to pine with dread
Of such mishap, or worse,—lie down in fear,
The night-mare sole sad partner of her bed,
Rise up in horror to recount bad dreams,
And seek to witches to interpret them,—
This oft I've known, but never knew I one
Who'd be content her lord should live at home
In love, and christian charity and peace.

ARTEVELDE.

And wherefore so? Because the women's heaven
Is vanity, and that is over all.
What's firiest still finds favour in their eyes;
What's noisiest keeps the entrance of their ears.
The noise and blaze of arms enchants them most:
Wit, too, and wisdom, that's admir'd of all,
They can admire—the glory, not the thing.
An unreflected light did never yet
Dazzle the vision feminine. For me,
Nor noise, nor blaze attend my peaceful path;
Nor, were it otherwise, should I desire
That noise and blaze of mine won any heart.

Wherefore it is that I would fain possess,
If any, that which David wept,—a love
Passing the love of women.

FATHER JOHN.

Deem you not
There may be one who so transcends her sex
In loving, as to match the son of Saul?

ARTEVELDE.

It may be I have deemed or dreamed of such.
But what know I? We figure to ourselves
The thing we like, and then we build it up
As chance will have it, on the rock or sand:
For thought is tired of wandering o'er the world,
And home-bound fancy runs her bark ashore.

Enter an ATTENDANT.

ATTENDANT.

Sir, here is master Van den Bosch below
Desires to speak with you.

ARTEVELDE.

To speak with me!
I marvel on what errand Van den Bosch
Can seek Van Artevelde. Say, I attend him.

Tell me if I shall find you at your cell
After the hour of complines?

FATHER JOHN.

Then and there
I shall be found, my son, and thou be welcome.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI.

THE SAME.

VAN ARTEVELDE *and* VAN DEN BOSCH.

ARTEVELDE.

This is a mighty matter, Van den Bosch,
And much to be revolv'd ere it be answered.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

The people shall elect thee with one voice.
I will ensure the White-Hoods, and the rest
Will eagerly accept thy nomination,
So to be rid of some that they like less.
Thy name is honour'd both of rich and poor,
For all are mindful of the glorious rule

Thy father bore, when Flanders, prosperous then,
From end to end obey'd him as one town.

ARTEVELDE.

They may remember it—and Van den Bosch,
May I not too bethink me of the end
To which this people brought my noble father?
They gorged the fruits of his good husbandry,
Till, drunk with long prosperity, and blind
With too much fatness, they tore up the root
From which their common weal had sprung and flourished.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

Nay, Master Philip, let the past be past.

ARTEVELDE.

Here on the doorstead of my father's house
The blood of his they spilt is seen no more.
But when I was a child I saw it there;
For so long as my widow-mother liv'd
Water came never near the sanguine stain.
She lov'd to show it me, and then with awe,
But hoarding still the purpose of revenge,
I heard the tale—which like a daily prayer
Repeated to a rooted feeling grew—
How long he fought, how falsely came like friends

The villains Guisebert Grutt and Simon Bette,
All the base murder of the one by many.
Even such a brutal multitude as they
Who slew my father—yea, who slew their own,
(For like one had he ruled the parricides)
Even such a multitude thou'dst have me govern.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

Why, what if Jacques Artevelde was killed?
He had his reign, and that for many a year,
And a great glory did he gain thereby.
And as for Guisebert Grutt and Simon Bette,
Their breath is in their nostrils as was his.
If you be as stout-hearted as your father,
And mindful of the villanous trick they play'd him,
Their hour of reckoning is well nigh come.
Of that, and of this base false-hearted league
They're making with the earl, these two to us
Shall give account.

ARTEVELDE.

They cannot render back
The golden bowl that's broken at the fountain,
Or mend the wheel that's broken at the cistern,
Or twist again the silver cord that's loosed.

Yea, life for life, vile bankrupts as they are,
Their worthless lives, for his of countless price,
Is their whole wherewithal to pay their debt.
Yet retribution is a goodly thing,
And it were well to wring the payment from them
Even to the utmost drop of their hearts' blood.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

Then will I call the people to the square,
And speak for your election.

ARTEVELDE.

Not so fast.
Your vessel, Van den Bosch, hath felt the storm:
She rolls dismasted in an ugly swell,
And you would make a jury-mast of me,
Whereon to spread the tatters of your canvass.
And what am I?—Why, I am as the oak
Which stood apart, far down the vale of life,
Growing retired beneath a quiet sky.
Wherefore should this be added to the wreck?

VAN DEN BOSCH.

I pray you, speak it in the Burghers' tongue;
I lack the scholarship to talk in tropes.

ARTEVELDE.

The question, to be plain, is briefly this:

Shall I, who, chary of tranquillity,
Not busy in this factious city's broils,
Nor frequent in the market-place, eschew'd
The even battle,—shall I join the rout?

VAN DEN BOSCH.

Times are sore chang'd, I see; there's none in Ghent
That answers to the name of Artevelde.
Thy father did not carp nor question thus
When Ghent invoked his aid. The days have been
When not a citizen drew breath in Ghent
But freely would have died in Freedom's cause.

ARTEVELDE.

With a good name thou christenest the cause.
True, to make choice of despots is some freedom,
The only freedom for this turbulent town,
Rule her who may. And in my father's time
We still were independent, if not free;
And wealth from independence, and from wealth
Enfranchisement will partially proceed.
The cause, I grant thee, Van den Bosch, is good;
And were I link'd to earth no otherwise
But that my whole heart centred in myself,
I could have toss'd you this poor life to play with,

Taking no second thought. But as things are,
I will revolve the matter warily,
And send thee word betimes of my conclusion.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

Betimes it must be, for the White-Hood chiefs
Meet two hours hence, and ere we separate
Our course must be determined.

ARTEVELDE.

In two hours,
If I be for you, I will send this ring
In token I have so resolv'd. Farewell.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

Philip Van Artevelde, a greater man
Than ever Ghent beheld we'll make of thee,
If thou be bold enough to try this venture.
God give thee heart to do so. Fare thee well.

[*Exit* VAN DEN BOSCH.

ARTEVELDE (*after a long pause*).

Is it vain glory that thus whispers me
That 'tis ignoble to have led my life
In idle meditations—that the times
Demand me, that they call my father's name?
Oh! what a fiery heart was his! such souls

Whose sudden visitations daze the world,
Vanish like lightning, but they leave behind
A voice that in the distance far away
Wakens the slumbering ages. Oh! my father!
Thy life is eloquent, and more persuades
Unto dominion than thy death deters;
For that reminds me of a debt of blood
Descended with my patrimony to me,
Whose paying off would clear my soul's estate.

Enter CLARA.

CLARA.

Was some one here? I thought I heard you speak.

ARTEVELDE.

You heard me speak?

CLARA.

I surely thought I heard you,
Just now, as I came in.

ARTEVELDE.

It may be so.

CLARA.

Was no one here then?

ARTEVELDE.

No one, as you see.

CLARA.

Why then I trust the orator your tongue
Found favour with the audience your ears;
But this poor orator of mine finds none,
For all at once, I see they droop and flag.
Will you not listen? I've a tale to tell.

ARTEVELDE (*as suddenly resuming himself*).

My fairest, sweetest, best beloved girl!
Who in the whole world would protect thy youth
If I were gone?

CLARA.

Gone! where? what ails you, Philip?

ARTEVELDE.

Nowhere, my love. Well, what hast thou to tell?

CLARA.

When I came home, on entering the hall
I stared to see the household all before me.
There was the steward sitting on the bench,
His head upon his hands between his knees.
In the oak chair old Ursel sate upright,
Swaying her body—so—from side to side,
Whilst maids and varlets stood disconsolate round.
What cheer? quoth I. But not a soul replied.

Is Philip well? Yea, madam, God be praised.
Then what dost look so gloomy for, my friend?
Alack-a-day, the stork! then all chimed in,
The stork, the stork, the stork! What, *he* is sick?
No, madam; sick!—he's gone—he's flown away.
Why then, quoth I, God speed him; speaking so
To raise their hearts, but they were all-too-heavy.
And, Philip, to say truth, I could have wish'd
This had not happened.

ARTEVELDE.

I remember now,
I thought I miss'd his clatter all night long.

CLARA.

Old Ursel says the sign proved never false
In all her time,—and she's so very old!
And then she says that Roger was esteem'd
The wisest stork in Ghent, and flew away
But twice before;—the first time in the night
Before my father took that office up
Which proved so fatal in the end, and then
The second time, the night before he died.

ARTEVELDE.

Sooner or later, something, it is certain,
Must bring men to their graves. Our every act

Is death's forerunner. It is but the date
That puzzles us to fix. My father lived
In that ill-omen'd office many a year,
And men had augur'd he must die at last
Without the stork to aid. If this be all
The wisest of his tribe can prophesy,
I am as wise as he. Enough of this.
Thou hast been visiting thy friend to-day,—
The Lady Adriana.

CLARA.

I come thence:
She is impatiently expecting you.

ARTEVELDE.

Can she with such impatience flatter one
So slothful and obscure as Artevelde?

CLARA.

How mean you?

ARTEVELDE.

Clara, know I not your sex?
Is she not one of you? Are you not all,
All from the shade averse? all prompt and prone
To make your idol of the million's idol?
Had I been one of these rash White-Hood chiefs,
Who live by military larceny,

Then might I well believe that she would wait
Impatiently my coming.

CLARA.

There you're wrong;
She never loved the White-Hoods.

ARTEVELDE.

She were wise
In that unloving humour to abide.
To wed a White-Hood, other ills apart,
Would put in jeopardy her fair possessions.
Fatal perchance it might be to her wealth;
Fatal it surely would be to her weal.
Farewell her peace, if such a one she lov'd.

CLARA.

Go ask her, Philip,—ask her whom she loves,
And she will tell you it is no such man.
Why go you not?

ARTEVELDE.

My mind is not at ease.
Yet I am going—to my chamber now,
Where let me own an undisturb'd half hour
Of rumination;—afterward to her.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE VII.

THE ENTRANCE HALL OF THE HOUSE VAN MERESTYN.

Enter VAN ARTEVELDE, *with Attendants.*

VAN ARTEVELDE.

Bear thou these letters to my steward; say
That messengers must straight proceed with them
To Grammont and elsewhere, as superscribed;
And should mishap occur to any one
Upon the road, which is not over free,
I charge me with ten masses for his soul.

(*To another.*)

My service to the noble Lord of Occo;
I thank him for his counsel, and will weigh it.

(*To the rest.*)

I will return alone. If any come
To seek me at my house, entreat their stay.

(*They withdraw, and a* WAITING-WOMAN *enters.*)

This, if I err not, is the pretty wench
That waits upon my lady. What, fair maid!
Thy mistress, having comeliness to spare,

Hath given thee of it. She's within, I think,
Or else wert thou a truant.

WAITING-WOMAN.

Sir, she is.

VAN ARTEVELDE.

Acquaint her then that I attend her leisure.

[*Exit* WAITING-WOMAN.

There is but one thing that still clogs me here.

(*A pause.*)

To bring a cloud upon the summer day
Of one so happy and so beautiful,—
It is a hard condition. For myself
I know not that the circumstance of life
In all its changes can so far afflict me
As makes anticipation much worth while.
But she is younger,—of a sex beside
Whose spirits are to our's as flame to fire,
More sudden and more perishable too;
So that the gust wherewith the one is kindled
Extinguishes the other. Oh she is fair!
As fair as Heaven to look upon! as fair
As ever vision of the Virgin blest
That weary pilgrim, resting by the fount
Beneath the palm, and dreaming to the tune

Of flowing waters, duped his soul withal.
It was permitted in my pilgrimage,
To rest beside the fount beneath the tree,
Beholding there no vision, but a maid
Whose form was light and graceful as the palm,
Whose heart was pure and jocund as the fount,
And spread a freshness and a verdure round.
This was permitted in my pilgrimage,
And loth am I to take my staff again.
Say that I fall not in this enterprise—
Still must my life be full of hazardous turns,
And they that house with me must ever live
In imminent peril of some evil fate.
—Make fast the doors; heap wood upon the fire;
Draw in your stools, and pass the goblet round,
And be the prattling voice of children heard.
Now let us make good cheer—but what is this?
Do I not see, or do I dream I see
A form that midmost in the circle sits
Half visible, his face deformed with scars,
And foul with blood—Oh yes—I know it—there
Sits DANGER with his feet upon the hearth.

(*Pauses for some time, and then resumes in a livelier tone.*)

Still for myself, I fear not, but that I,
Taking what comes, leaving what leave I must,
Could make a sturdy struggle through the world.
But for the maid, the choice were better far
To win her dear heart back again if lost,
And stake it upon some less dangerous cast.

(*Re-enter* WAITING-WOMAN.)

WAITING-WOMAN.

My mistress, sir, so please you, takes her walk
Along the garden terrace, and desires
That you'll go forth to meet her.

ARTEVELDE.

For if fate
Had done its best to single out a soul
Most formed for peaceful virtues——ah! I come.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE VIII.

A GARDEN.

ARTEVELDE *and* ADRIANA.

ARTEVELDE.

I have some little overstayed my time.

First let me plead for pardon of that trespass.

ADRIANA.

I said to Clara when the sun went down;
Now if—though truly 'tis impossible—
He come not ere yon blushing cloud grows grey,
His promises are no more worth than bubbles.
And look how grey it is!

ARTEVELDE.

A hectic change.
The smiling dawn, the laughing blue-eyed day,
The grey-beard eve incessantly pass on,
Fast fleeting generations born of time,
And buried in eternity—they pass
And not a day resigns its little life
And enters into darkness, that can say,
'Lo! I was fair, and such as I have been
My issue shall be. Lo! I cast abroad
Such affluence of glory over earth,
That what had been but goodly to the sight,
Was made magnificent, what had been bare
Showed forth a naked beauty—in all this
Was I thus rich, and that which I possessed
To-morrow shall inherit.' False as hope!
To-morrow's heritage is cloud and storm.

ADRIANA.

Oh! what a moody moralist you grow!
Yet in the even-down letter you are right;
For Ursel, who is weatherwise, says always
That when the sun sets red with the wind south,
The morrow shall be stormy. What of that?
Oh! now I know; the fish won't take the bait.
I wonder what delight you take in fishing!
Were I to hang upon a river's marge
So tediously, angling, angling still,
The fiend that watches our impatient fits
Would some time tempt me to jump headlong in.
And you—you cannot quit it for a day!
Have I not read your sadness?

ARTEVELDE.

Have you so!
Oh! you are cunning to divine men's thoughts.
But come what may to-morrow, we have now
A tranquil hour, which let us entertain
As though it were the latest of its kind.

ADRIANA.

Why should we think it so?

ARTEVELDE.

Sweet Adriana,

I trust that many such may come to you;
But for myself, I feel as if life's stream
Were shooting o'er some verge, to make a short,
An angry and precipitate descent,
Thenceforward much tormented on its way.

ADRIANA.

What can have filled you with such sad surmises?
You were not wont to speak despondently.

ARTEVLDE.

Nor do I now despond. All my life long
I have beheld with most respect the man
Who knew himself and knew the ways before him,
And from amongst them chose considerately,
With a clear foresight, not a blindfold courage;
And, having chosen, with a steadfast mind
Pursued his purposes. I trained myself
To take my place in high or low estate
As one of that small order of mankind.
Wherefore, though I indulge no more the dream
Of living as I hoped I might have lived,
A life of temperate and thoughtful joy,
Yet I repine not, and from this time forth
Will cast no look behind.

ADRIANA.

Oh Artevelde!

What can have made you so mysterious?
What change hath come since morning? Oh! how soon
The words and looks which seem'd all confidence,
To me at least—how soon are they recalled!
But let them be—it matters not; I, too,
Will cast no look behind—Oh, if I should,
My heart would never hold its wretchedness.

ARTEVELDE.

My gentle Adriana, you run wild
In false conjectures; hear me to the end.
If hitherto we have not said we lov'd,
Yet hath the heart of each declar'd its love
By all the tokens wherein love delights.
We heretofore have trusted in each other,
Too wholly have we trusted to have need
Of words or vows, pledges or protestations.
Let not such trust be hastily dissolved.

ADRIANA.

I trusted not. I hoped that I was loved,
Hoped and despaired, doubted and hoped again,
Till this day, when I first breathed freelier,

Daring to trust—and now—Oh God, my heart!
It was not made to bear this agony—
Tell me you love me, or you love me not.

ARTEVELDE.

I love thee, dearest, with as large a love
As e'er was compass'd in the breast of man.
Hide then those tears, beloved, where thou wilt,
And find a resting-place for that so wild
And troubled heart of thine; sustain it here,
And be its flood of passion wept away.

ADRIANA.

What was it that you said then? If you love,
Why have you thus tormented me?

ARTEVELDE.

Be calm;
And let me warn thee, ere thy choice be fixed,
What fate thou mayst be wedded to with me.
Thou hast beheld me living heretofore
As one retired in staid tranquillity.
The dweller in the mountains, on whose ear
The accustomed cataract thunders unobserved;
The seaman, who sleeps sound upon the deck,
Nor hears the loud lamenting of the blast,

Nor heeds the weltering of the plangent wave;
These have not liv'd more undisturb'd than I.
But build not upon this; the swollen stream
May shake the cottage of the mountaineer,
And drive him forth; the seaman, roused at length
Leaps from his slumber on the wave-washed deck;
And now the time comes fast, when here, in Ghent,
He who would live exempt from injuries
Of armed men, must be himself in arms.
This time is near for all,—nearer for me.
I will not wait upon necessity
And leave myself no choice of vantage ground,
But rather meet the times where best I may,
And mould and fashion them as best I can.
Reflect then that I soon may be embarked
In all the hazards of these troublesome times,
And in your own free choice take or resign me.

ADRIANA.

Oh Artevelde, my choice is free no more.
Be mine, all mine, let good or ill betide.
In war or peace, in sickness or in health,
In trouble and in danger and in distress,
Through time and through eternity I'll love thee;

In youth and age, in life and death I'll love thee,
Here and hereafter, with all my soul and strength.
So God accept me as I never cease
From loving and adoring thee next Him;
And oh, may He pardon me if so betray'd
By mortal frailty as to love thee more.

ARTEVELDE.

I fear, my Adriana, 'tis a rash
And passionate resolve that thou hast made;
But how should *I* admonish thee, myself
So great a winner by thy desperate play.
Heaven is o'er all, and unto Heaven I leave it.
That which hath made me weak shall make me strong,
Weak to resist, strong to requite thy love;
And if some tax thou payest for that love,
Thou shalt receive it from love's exchequer.
Now must I go; I'm waited for ere this.

ADRIANA.

Upon this finger be the first tax raised.

(*Draws off a ring, which she gives him.*)

Now what shall I receive?

ARTEVELDE.

The like from mine.

I had forgot—I have it not to-day:
But in its stead wear this around thy neck,
And on thy lips this impress. Now, good night.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE CHANGES TO BRUGES.

AN APARTMENT IN THE PALACE OF THE EARL OF FLANDERS.

THE EARL *and* SIR WALTER D'ARLON.

D'ARLON.

I marvel, my good lord, you take that knave
So freely to your counsels.

EARL.

Treason done
Against my enemies secures him mine.
His countrymen of Ghent can ne'er forgive him;
Which knowing, he will therefore cleave to me.
Besides, he learns the minds of men towards me,
Here and in Ghent, how each man stands affected.
For this and other serviceable arts,

Not out of friendship, do I show him favour.
Have you not seen a jackdaw take his stand
On a sheep's back, permitted there to perch,
Less out of kindness to so foul a bird,
Than for commodious uses of his beak?
As to the sheep the jackdaw, so to me
Is Gilbert Matthew; from my fleece he picks
The vermin that molest me.—Here he comes!

Enter GILBERT MATTHEW.

Well, honest Gilbert, are the knights not gone?

GILBERT MATTHEW.

Not yet, my lord; they urge in lieu of lives
The forfeiture of sundry burgages,
To fill your coffers. I denied them roundly.

EARL.

I bid thee not!

GILBERT MATTHEW.

Lives, lives, my lord, take freely;
But spare the lands and burgages and monies.
The father dead, shall sleep and be forgotten;
The patrimony gone, that makes a wound
That's slow to heal; heirs are above-ground ever.

EARL.

Well, be it so.

GILBERT MATTHEW.

The knights wait here without
To take their audience of leave, and bring
A new adherent.

EARL.

Give them entrance now.

(GILBERT MATTHEW *goes out, and returns with* SIR SIMON BETTE *and* SIR GUISEBERT GRUTT.)

SIR SIMON BETTE.

This audience we made bold to crave, my lord,
To advertise your highness that our friend
Of whom we spake, the valiant Lord of Occo,
Has come here at great hazard in disguise,
To show how matters now proceed in Ghent.

EARL.

He shall be welcome. Does he wait?

SIR SIMON BETTE.

He does;
And with your highness' leave I'll bring him to you.

[*Exit.*

EARL.

Think'st thou he may be steadied?

GILBERT MATTHEW.

At this time
He has great power to do your highness service;
And your free pardon for all past misdeeds,
And promise of preferment, will do much
To make him wholly yours.

EARL.

Well, well, so be it.
'Tis no such urgent need we have of him,
But if he be so contrite, it is well.

Re-enter SIR SIMON BETTE *with* OCCO.

You're a bold man, my Lord of Occo, you
That have so long borne arms against your liege,
Without safe-conduct to have ventured here.

OCCO.

My sole safe-conduct is the good intent
I bear to your affairs, my noble lord;
Nought else impell'd me hither, and nought else,
I trust, is needed for my safe return.

EARL.

Thou shalt return in safety. Say, what news
Bring'st thou from Ghent?

OCCO.

My lord, peace, peace is there
The only cry, except with desperate chiefs,
Who are so weak, that fair conditions now
Would draw their followers from them to a man.

EARL

Our proffer of conditions is made known
Already to our good Sir Simon Bette,
And Guisebert Grutt.

SIR GUISEBERT GRUTT.

My lord is pleased to grant
Indemnity to all save some three hundred;
The list to be hereafter named by him,
And dealt with at his pleasure.

OCCO.

This is well!
These terms are just and merciful indeed!
But then they must be proffered presently.
You know, my lord, the humour we of Ghent
Have still indulged—we never cry for peace
But when we're out of breath; give breathing time,
And ere the echo of our cry of peace
Have died away, we drown it with war! war!

Even now the faction hopes to be redeemed
By a new leader, Philip of Artevelde.

EARL.

Ha! Artevelde? that name is ominous.
Whenever sunshine has come near my house,
An Artevelde has cast his shadow there.
I have not heard the name of Artevelde
Since that usurper Jacques died the death.
This Philip then was in his infancy.
What is he made of? Of his father's metal?
A dangerous man, in truth, sirs, if he be.

GILBERT MATTHEW.

Oh fear him not, my lord; his father's name
Is all that from his father he derives.
He is a man of singular address
In catching river-fish. His life hath been,
Till now, more like a peasant's or a monk's,
Than like the issue of so great a man.

OCCO.

Yet is his name so worshipp'd of the people,
That were the time and scope permitted him
To grow expert, some danger might come of him.
Wherefore 'twere well to note him on your list.

EARL.

Let him be noted. Think you, then, Sir Guy,
That they'll accept our terms, or still hold out?

OCCO.

Let these good knights make instant speed to Ghent,
And call the burghers to the market-place.
Then let to-morrow, at their bidding, wear
The aspect of to-day, and all will prosper.
Take them whilst yet Nivelle is in their thoughts.

EARL.

You counsel well. Prepare, sirs, to depart;
We'll have the terms engross'd, and send them you.
Farewell, my lord; farewell, Sir Simon Bette;
Sir Guisebert Grutt, farewell.—We'll send them you.

[*Exeunt the* EARL, GILBERT MATTHEW, OCCO, *and* SIR SIMON BETTE. *As* SIR GUISEBERT GRUTT *is following, he is detained by* D'ARLON.

D'ARLON.

One word, fair sir.

SIR GUISEBERT GRUTT.

My good lord, at your pleasure.

D'ARLON.

I have a foolish errand in your town.
There is a damsel.....but your head is white;
You will not heed me.

SIR GUISEBERT GRUTT.

Pray proceed, my lord.
I have not yet forgotten how in youth
A damsel's love, amongst the amorous,
Was more than bed of down or morning posset.

D'ARLON.

In brief, kind sir, conveyance hencé to Ghent
Is what I crave. Methinks, amongst your train,
And habited like them, I well could pass,
And no one mark me.

SIR GUISEBERT GRUTT.

Sir, you're free to try.
And if our friends should still be uppermost,
You will risk nothing. Should the faction reign,
You shall do well to keep your secret close,
And make your best speed back.

D'ARLON.

Leave that to me.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—GHENT.

THE HOUSE VAN ARTEVELDE.

HE, *and* VAN DEN BOSCH.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

When they were brought together in the square,
I spake. I told them that they lack'd a chief;
For though they saw that dangers compass'd them,
Amongst their captains there was none could win
The love of all, but still some guild or craft
Would stone him if they might. I bade them think
How Jacques Artevelde from lowest state
Had borne this city up to sovereign sway;
And how his son had liv'd aloof from strife,
To none bore malice, and wish'd well to all.
With that they caught thy name, and shouted much,
And some old men swore they remembered well,
In the good times of Jacques Artevelde,

When they were young, that all the world went right,
And after he was dead, that they grew old;
And wenches, who were there, said Artevelde
Was a sweet name and musical to hear.
In brief, for these and other weighty reasons
They were resolv'd to choose thee for their chief.
But 'Soft! my friends,' quoth I; 'ye know not yet
How he inclines to that you'd put upon him;
He hath no friends and favourites to reward;
He hath no adverse faction to repress;
Of what avail to him were power and office?
But nathless we'll entreat him.' 'Bring him here,'
Was then the cry. 'More meet it were, my friends,'
Quoth I, 'that we go seek this noble youth;
On such high worth we humbly should attend,
And not expect such worth should wait on us.'
To this they gave assent, and will be here
Soon as the crafts are gather'd all together.

ARTEVELDE.

Good! When they come I'll speak to them.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

'Twere well.
Thou canst not miss to please them in this mood.

The trial will be after, when they flag,
And want a long spur-rowel in their bellies.
Thou lack'st experience to deal with men;
Thou must take counsel.

ARTEVELDE.

I will hear it always.
But yet my task methinks were easy learnt.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

Canst learn to bear thee high amongst the commons?
Canst thou be cruel? To be esteem'd of them
Thou must not set more store by lives of men
Than lives of larks in season.

ARTEVELDE.

Be it so.
I can do what is needful. Where, I pray you,
Abide the messengers of peace from Bruges?

VAN DEN BOSCH.

They lodg'd last night i' the Clothiers' square. God's blood!
They thought their houses not so safe, belike.

ARTEVELDE.

Why thought they that?

VAN DEN BOSCH.

They enter'd by that quarter;

And near Sir Simon's, which they reach'd the first,
I had provided some pick'd men to meet them.
But, spite my cautions, they brake forth too soon,
And that with howls that Bruges itself might hear.

ARTEVELDE.

So the knights took the warning?

VAN DEN BOSCH.

They drew back,
And gallop'd to the square, the while their train
Stood fast and fought; and it is worthy note
That one amongst them shouted in the fray
The D'Arlon's war-cry, whence he may be known
Of that lord's following, and wherefore here
We well may guess.

ARTEVELDE.

Had *he* been slain 'twere well:
Had others been 'twere not. If I rule Ghent,
No man shall charge me that his life or goods
Are less secure than mine, so he but keep
The laws that I have made. Believe me, Peter,
Thy scheme of rule is too disorderly.
Thy force still spends, and not augments itself.
To make the needy and the desperate thine,
Thou gav'st them up the plunder of the rich;

Now these grown desperate and needy too,
Raise up a host against thee;—whereupon,
No spoil remaining, thy good friends depart.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

God's curse go with them!

ARTEVELDE.

Like enough it may.
They've carried it about these five long years;
They took it with them to the peasant's hut—
They took it with them to the Burgher's stall—
A roving curse it followed at their heels—
And like enough it will abide amongst them.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

Hark! here they come.

(*Shouts of* 'Artevelde!' *are heard from without.*)

Out, out, and show thyself.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

THE STREET IN FRONT OF VAN ARTEVELDE'S HOUSE.

HE *and* VAN DEN BOSCH.

The Multitude below.

ARTEVELDE.

My friends, I thank you for the good respect
In which you hold me; sirs, I thank you all.
You say that for the love you bore my father,
You and your predecessors, you'd have me
What he was once,—your captain. Verily
I think you do not well remember, sirs,
The end of all the love ye bore my father.
He was the noblest and the wisest man
That ever rul'd in Ghent; yet, sirs, ye slew him;
By his own door, here where I stand, ye slew him!
What then am I to look for from your loves?
If the like trust ye should repose in me,
And then in like wise cancel it,—my friends,
That were an ill reward.

SEVERAL BURGHERS.

Nay, Master Philip!

ARTEVELDE.

Oh sirs! I know ye look not to such end,
Nor may it be yourselves that bring it round;
But he who rules must still displeasure some,
And he should have protection from the many,
So long as he shall serve the many well.
Sirs, to that end his power must be maintained;
The power of peace and war, of life and death,
He must have absolute. How say ye, sirs?
Will ye bestow this power on me? if so,
Shout 'Artevelde,' and ye may add to that,
'Captain of Ghent,'—if not, go straightway home.

(*All shout* 'Artevelde, Captain of Ghent!')

ARTEVELDE.

So be it.
Now listen to your Captain's first command.
It has been heretofore the use of some
On each cross accident, here or without,
To cry aloud for peace. This is most hurtful.
It much unsettles brave men's minds, disturbs
The councils of the wise, and daunts the weak.
Wherefore my pleasure is, and I decree,
That whoso shall but talk of terms of peace

From this time forth, save in my private ear,
Be deem'd a traitor to the town of Ghent,
And me its Captain ; and a traitor's death
Shall that man die.

BURGHERS.

He shall, he shall, he shall.
We'll kill the slave outright.

ARTEVELDE.

No : mark me further.
If any citizen shall slay another
Without my warranty by word or sign,
Although that slayer be as true as steel,
This other treacherous as Iscariot's self,
The punishment is death.

(*A pause.*)

Ye speak no word.
What do we fight for, friends ? for liberty ?
What is that liberty for which we fight ?
Is it the liberty to slay each other ?
Then better were it we had back again
Roger D'Auterne, the bailiff. No, my friends,
It is the liberty to choose our chief,
And bow to none beside. Now ye choose me,

And in that choice let each man be assur'd
That none but I alone shall dare to judge him.
Whoso spills blood without my warranty,
High man or low, rich man or poor, shall die.

BURGHERS.

The man shall die, he shall deserve to die.
We'll kill him on the spot, and that is law.

ARTEVELDE.

Hold, hold, my friends, ye are too hasty here.
You shall *not* kill him; 'tis the headsman's part,
Who first must have my warrant for his death.

BURGHERS.

Kill him who likes, the man shall die; that's law.

ARTEVELDE.

What further knowledge of my rules ye need
Ye peradventure may obtain, my friends,
More aptly from my practice than my speech.
Now to the Stadt-House—bring the litter, fellows—
And there the deans of crafts shall do me homage.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

Ho! stand apart. Bring in the litter, varlets.
Now sirs, let's hear your voices as you go.

(*Exeunt, with shouts of* 'Artevelde'!)

SCENE III.

THE HOUSE VAN MERESTYN.

SIR WALTER D'ARLON *and* CLARA VAN ARTEVELDE.

She is engaged in binding up his arm, which is wounded.

CLARA.

False Knight, thou com'st to see thy ladye love,
And canst not stay thy stomach for an hour,
But thou must fight i'the street. Thy hungry sword—
Could it keep Lent no longer? By my faith,
Thou shalt do penance at thy lady's feet
The live-long night for this.

D'ARLON.

Gramercy, lady!
'Twere a sharp trial, one man to keep lent
Whilst all around kept carnival; the sin
Was in the stomachs of your citizens:
But I will do the penance not the less.

CLARA.

Go to; confess thyself; make a clean breast.
Thou'dst vow'd a vow to some fair dame at Bruges
To kill for her dear love a score of burghers.

Nay, it is certain—never cross thyself—
Hold up this arm—alas! there was a time
When knights were true and constant to their loves,
And had but one a-piece—an honest time.
Knights were Knights then; God mend the age, say I!
True as the steel upon their backs were they,
And their one lady's word was gospel law.
Would I had liv'd a hundred years ago!

D'ARLON.

Couldst thou live backward for a hundred years,
And then live on a hundred years to come,
Thou'dst not find one to love thee trulier
Than I have lov'd.

CLARA.

What, what! no truer knight?
A seemly word forsooth! Hast many more such?
No truer knight?—'Tis thus you great lords live,
With flatterers round you all your golden youth,
And know yourselves as much as I know Puck.
Your heads so many bee-hives; honeyed words
Swarm in your ears, and other from your mouth
Go buzzing out to ply for sweets abroad;
And so your summer wastes, till some cold night
The cunning husbandman comes stealthily,

And there is fire and brimstone for my lords!
Hold up this arm,—let go my hand, I say—
Am I to tie thy bandage with my teeth?

D'ARLON.

Sweet Clara, no! they may not do that office;
The tying of the tongue's too much for them.

CLARA.

Ah—there you go,—another more such word
And you're a banish'd man—gone—gone from Ghent
Never to come again, never hear more
The music of her bells—no, nor the chimes
So oft rung out to celebrate your coming
By this poor tongue of mine.

D'ARLON.

Sweet are the chimes
Of that same never-weary sacristan;
And here upon his temple's ruby gates
Might I devoutly—

CLARA.

Go, here's Adriana.

Enter ADRIANA.

ADRIANA.

My lord—good heaven! Your arm—I fear you're hurt.

CLARA.

Hold, hush! I'll answer for thee. Merely a scratch;
A scratch, fair lady,—that, and nothing more.
It gives us no concern; 'twas thus we got it:
Riding along the streets of this good town,
A score of burghers met us, peaceful drones—
Saying their prayers, belike;—howe'er that be,
The senseless men were wrapp'd in such abstraction
They heeded not our lordship; whereat we,
Unused to such demeanour, shook ourselves,
And pricked them with our lance. A fray ensued,
And lo! as we were slaying some fourteen
That stay'd our passage, it pleas'd Providence,
Of whom the meanest may be instruments,
Thus gently to chastise us on the arm,
Doubtless for some good cause, tho' what, we know not.

ADRIANA.

My lord, you know her; she is ever thus,
Still driving things against you to your face,
And when you're gone, if I should chance let fall
A word, or but a hint of censure, as—
My lord of Arlon is too rash, too hot,
Too anything—

CLARA.

She sighs and says, too true.

ADRIANA.

No verily. But why, my lord, come here
At all this hazard only to be railed at?

CLARA.

Yes, tell us why.

D'ARLON.

Behold the very cause.

Enter ARTEVELDE.

ARTEVELDE (*as he enters*).

Let my guard wait without.

CLARA.

His guard! What's this!

ARTEVELDE.

My lord of Arlon, God be with your lordship!
And guide you upon less adventurous tracks
Than this you tread. I'll speak with you anon.
My Adriana! victim that thou art!
Thy lover should have been some gentle youth
In gay attire, with laughter on his lips,
Who'd nestle in thy bosom all night long,

And ne'er let harness clink upon thine ears,
Save only in romaunt and roundelay.
Such is what should be, and behold what is!
A man of many cares new taken up,
To whom there's nothing more can come in life,
But what is serious and solicitous.
One who betakes him to his nuptial bed,
His thoughts still busy with the watch and ward;
And if his love breathe louder than her wont,
Starts from his sleep, and thinks the bells ring backwards.
A man begirt with eighty thousand swords,
Scarce knowing which are in the hands of friends
And which against him;—such a sort of man
Thy lover is—his fate for life or death
Link'd to a cause which some deem desperate.
Such is Van Artevelde, for he is now
Chief Captain of the White-Hoods and of Ghent.

CLARA.

Nay! is it even so!

ARTEVELDE.

Even so it is.

ADRIANA.

And thou art captain of these savages!

And thou wilt trample with them through the blood
Of fellow-men, alas it may be, too,
Of fellow-citizens—for what care they?
And thou who wert a gentle-hearted man,
Must lead these monsters where they will!

ARTEVELDE.

Not so.
I purpose but to lead them where *I* will.

ADRIANA.

Then they will turn upon thee; never yet
Would they endure a chief that cross'd their humour.

ARTEVELDE.

That is the patience they've to learn from me.
The times have tamed them, and mischance of late
Has forced an iron bit between their teeth,
By help whereof I hope to rein them round.

CLARA.

Oh, they will murder thee!

ARTEVELDE.

It may be so.
But I hope better things—yet this is sure,
That they *shall* murder me ere make me go
The way that is not my way for an inch.

ADRIANA.

Alas! and is it come to this!—Oh God!
What business has a woman to be here!

ARTEVELDE.

This I foresaw, and things have fallen out
No worse than I forewarned thee that they might.
What must be, must. My course hath been appointed;
For I feel that within me which accords
With what I have to do. The field is fair,
And I have no perplexity or cloud
Upon my vision. Every thing is clear.
And take this with thee for thy comfort too—
That that man is not most in tribulation
Who walks his own way, resolute of mind,
With answerable skill to pick his steps.
Men in their places are the men that stand,
And I am strong and stable on my legs;
For though full many a care from this time forth,
Must harbour in my head, my heart is fresh,
And there is but this trouble touches it,
I know not what to do with thee.

ADRIANA.

With me,
Say'st thou?—Oh never vex thy heart for that;

Nor think of me so all unworthily
As that some chubby merry-making boy
Were fittest for my mate. Nay, said I not—
And if I said it not, I say it now,—
I'll follow thee through sunshine and through storm;
I will be with thee in thy weal and woe,
In thy afflictions, should they fall upon thee,
In thy temptations when bad men beset thee,
In all the perils which must now press round thee,
And, should they crush thee, in the hour of death.
If thy ambition, late aroused, was that
Which pushed thee on this perilous adventure,
Then *I* will be ambitious too,—if not,
And it was thy ill fortune drove thee to it,
Then I will be unfortunate no less.
I will resemble thee in that and all things
Wherein a woman may: grave will I be
And thoughtful, for already is it gone—
The boon that nature gave me at my birth,
My own original gaiety of heart.
All will I part with to partake thy cares,
Let but thy love my lesser joys outlast.

ARTEVELDE.

The last of love for thee were last of all

That makes this mortal being what it is,
Or points its path beyond. Dismiss thy fears.
Much happiness shall be thy portion yet.
Love will be with thee, an abiding glow,
And thou shalt find thy gaiety again.
But bring me through the business of this day,
And on the morrow thou shalt see me smile
In bridegroom fashion, and my bride shall own
The sovereignty of gladness in her heart.——
My lord, your pardon; we consume your time,
Which, I'm constrain'd to say, is short in Ghent.
I hitherto have welcomed you amongst us,
And kept the secret of your sojourns here;
So doing, partly for respect to you,
And partly for her sake, this foolish girl's,
My pretty Clara's, who will let me say
I had not pleased her else; but now, my lord,
As you have heard, I hold an office here,
With duties appertaining, and must needs
(With sorrow for your sudden going hence)
Make offer of my passport,—good till sun-set.

D'ARLON.

If no discourtesy is meant by this
I have but to depart.

CLARA.

Depart! and wherefore?

ARTEVELDE.

There's nothing meant but honour, nothing else,
Howe'er to rude appearances enforced.
When there is peace between the Earl and Ghent
'Twill be a joy to me to see again
The gallant lord of Arlon; till that time
We meet not, save in hostile ranks opposed,
Or captive, I in Bruges or he in Ghent.

D'ARLON.

Sir, it is not for me to say you nay
In your own town, with not a man to back me;
Nor would I willingly distrust your word
That all is honourably meant; for else
I scarce should miss to find a future time
For fair requital.

ARTEVELDE.

On my faith, my lord,
I love you and respect you.

D'ARLON.

'Tis enough.
Then I depart in peace.

CLARA.

Depart! what's this?

What's all the coil about? Depart! aye truly,
That's when I bid him, not an instant sooner.
Philip has altogether lost his senses.
Dismiss him thus, and bid him come no more!
Then what becomes of me? Oh, I'm a child!
I'm to be whipped for crying after him;
But let me tell thee, Philip, I'm the child
Of Jacques Artevelde, and know by that
I am not likely to sit tamely down
Beneath a wrong like this.—So look well to it.
An injury to myself I might forgive,
But one to D'Arlon— (*Bursting into tears.*)
Sir, think twice upon it,
Lest you should lose a sister unawares.

D'ARLON.

Nay Clara, nay, be not so troubled.

ARTEVELDE.

There—
You see the humour she is of, my lord;
But, be my sins confess'd, the fault is mine.
An orphan sister, and an only one,
What could I less but let her have her will
In all things possible? An easy man

She still has found me, and knows nothing yet
Of opposition to her high commands.
You, if you e'er should take her to yourself,
May teach her better doctrine. Patience, Clara,
Patience, my love; nor let this knight discern
His future trials thus presignified
In rain and lightning; let him not, my love.

CLARA (*weeping*).

When will he come again?

ARTEVELDE.

When peace comes, dearest;
We'll make him welcome then to bower and hall,
And thou shalt twine a garland for his brow
Of olive and of laurels won from me.

D'ARLON.

Be pacified, sweet Clara; dry your tears.
He but deals with me as he has the right
And deems himself in duty bound. Such things
Shall jar no string between us.

ARTEVELDE.

Nobly said.
I leave her in your hands, and hope your aid
For bringing her to reason.

D'ARLON.

I entreat

One word in private with you ere we part.

ARTEVELDE

Take in my sister, Adriana—go,
Impart to her a portion of that strength
Which there is in thee—teach her to subdue
The woman in her nature.

CLARA.

I'll not go.

You mean to take him from me unawares.

D'ARLON.

He means it not, sweet Clara, be persuaded.
Upon the faith and honour of a knight,
I'll come to thee again.

CLARA.

And if thou dost not,

Upon the faith and honour of a maid
I'll never see thee more.

[*Exeunt* ADRIANA *and* CLARA.

D'ARLON.

My errand here

Is not so wholly idle as no doubt
Thou deem'st it. I would first have warn'd thee off,
The office which, with most unhappy haste,
Already thou hast clutch'd. That being vain,
I next would bid thee to beware false friends.
Look that there be no treason in thy camp;
I may not now say more; but be assured
'Twill be thy life thou fight'st for.

ARTEVELDE.

Noble D'Arlon!
It is a grief to me that we should meet
In opposition thus. I will look round,
And profit by thy warning if I may.
Trust me 'twould irk my heart no less than thine,
(And may this show in all my acts hereafter),
To enter in alliance with foul play
For any earthly meed. Sir, fare you well.

D'ARLON.

Whenso' the choice and noblest of my friends
Are bid to memory's feast, then, Artevelde,
The place of honour shall be thine. Farewell.

[*Exit.*

Enter the CAPTAIN *of* ARTEVELDE'S GUARD.

CAPTAIN.

Sir, there's a messenger from Van den Bosch,
Who craves to see you instantly: another
Says the Lord Occo waits your leisure.

ARTEVELDE (*after a pause, not having attended to him*).

Ha!
Lord Occo, saidst thou? tell me, what of him?

CAPTAIN.

He waits your leisure, sir.

ARTEVELDE.

And when comes that?
He shall *not* wait my leisure. And what more?

CAPTAIN.

Sir, Van den Bosch would see you.

ARTEVELDE.

It is well:
I will attend the Lord of Occo first,
And Van den Bosch shall find me at my house,
Some half hour hence. How look we sir, abroad

CAPTAIN.

The citizens are trooping to the Stadt-House.
'Tis said Sir Simon and Sir Guisebert pass
From door to door incessantly.

ARTEVELDE.

To beg?

CAPTAIN.

To gain a strong attendance.

ARTEVELDE.

Wo the while!
A bear, a fiddle, and a pair of monkeys,
Had sped the service better.

CAPTAIN.

Both mean and notable, and rich and poor,
Have they solicited, assuring all
That when it shall be heard what terms of peace
Are offered, they will hug the messengers
That after painful travail for their love
Have brought them such good news.

ARTEVELDE.

I'll swear they will.
But what? Thou look'st not over cheerily;
Think'st thou the knights have made some way then, ha?

CAPTAIN.

The deacons of eight crafts have sided with them,
And many of the aldermen.

ARTEVELDE.

Ay, truly?

CAPTAIN.

And all the men of lineage.

ARTEVELDE.

That's as thou hearest.

CAPTAIN.

The citizens pass'd by me in the street
By scores and hundreds, and of them I saw
The greater part, 'twas plain, would stand against us.

ARTEVELDE.

Build up, and then pull down, and then build up,—
And always in the ruins some are—Well?

CAPTAIN.

And I'm afeard, though loth I am to think it,
A few amongst your guard have fallen off
At seeing us outnumber'd thus.

ARTEVELDE.

Is't so?
Why, wherefore should I wish that it were not?

The more faint hearts fall off the better, sir;
So fear shall purge us to a sound condition.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

THE DWELLING HOUSE OF THE LORD OF OCCO.

HE *and* VAN AESWYN.

OCCO.

The mariners, then, are for us?

AESWYN.

They are ours.

OCCO.

And these are of the curriers that thou bring'st me?

AESWYN.

The deacons of that craft—they're backward still:
They're ever harping upon Artevelde,
Who told their worships, when they did him homage,
If his poor humour govern'd, nothing else
But leathern jerkins should be worn in Ghent.

OCCO.

We'll deal with them the same as with the fullers.
So bring them in. [*Exit* VAN AESWYN.

Well done, Sir Curriers!
These precious moments must be given to you!
The devil curry you for senseless boors!

Re-enter VAN AESWYN, *with the two* CRAFTSMEN.

Good-morrow, masters—Ha! my valued friend,
Jacob Van Ryk; and if my eyes see true,
Master———

AESWYN.

Van Muck.

OCCO.

Tush, tush, sir! tell not me.
Have I forgotten my old friend Van Muck,
Or any of my friends?—though time is short,
And we must scant our greetings. Worthy sirs,
We're in a perilous predicament;
And I should take no step without advice.
Rash were it, and a tempting Providence,

Should I proceed without consulting you.
We see, sirs, we must see—we can't but own,
That we have no choice left us, but of peace,
Or else destruction. It is come to that.
Then if we must be subject to the Earl,
I will confess I'm not so subtle-witted
To see much difference 'twixt this hour and that,
The going over to him now at once
With flesh upon our bones, or holding back
Till famine wastes it or steel hacks it off:
I see no difference.

VAN MUCK.

Truly, sir, nor I.

OCCO.

Aye, but there is a difference, my friends,
Which I forgot. For, hark you in your ear!
Those who go over but when all go over,
If they escape from pains and penalties,
Can scarcely claim much merit with the Earl;
But they who act an independent part,
Who take a step or two before the herd,
Whilst the will's free, who lead and do not follow—
These men have claims; they have a right to say,

Reward us for our voluntary service.
Nor will they be unanswer'd, that I know.
'First serve the first,' is what they say at Bruges.

VAN RYK.

'Tis a good proverb, sir, for early men,
And we have ne'er been slack in things of credit;
But we have scruples here. We see it thus:
If we should but shout peace with half the town,
The Earl would scarce distinguish us from others;
If, on the other hand, we use our weapons
Against our friends, they'd call us renegades,
And blacken us for false and treacherous knaves.

OCCO.

Why look ye now; too surely, should ye shout,
And fail in action, 'twere no singular service;
There's no great guerdon were deserv'd by that.
The clerkships of the wards (which after peace
Must be new filled) would not be won by shouts.
But where's the treachery? My worthy friends,
Look at the matter simply as it is.
Here is a town beleaguer'd in such wise
That it must needs surrender upon terms.
Then come a knot of desperate-minded men,

Who, deeming the rendition gives them up
To punishment, make head against the rest.
These think no shame to say that all must die
To save their one—two—three—half-dozen heads,
From certain hazards. Why, if fall they must,
And they would rather 'twere by steel than cord,
Let them assail us, and let us be men.
Are we not free to choose 'twixt peace and war?
They—they it is that are so treacherous—they,
Who would betray a city to destruction
For private and particular ends of theirs.
Then let us rally round the public weal,
And link our names with that.

VAN RYK.

It must be own'd
The city's weal doth loudly call upon us;
But some of us there are, who recently
Swore fealty to Artevelde.

OCCO.

What then?
That was but for the war—not knowing then
That it was ended by your deputies,
And peace concluded: answer not so idly.

Swore ye not fealty to the Earl before?
Come, come, my friends—we're all as one, I see;
And let me tell you that the whole of Ghent,
Almost the whole, is minded like yourselves.
Strange is it men shall meditate and muse
In secret all alike, and show no sign
Till a blow's struck, and then they speak it out,
And each man finds in each his counterpart;
And, as a sluice were open'd, all shall rush
To find the self-same level, and pour on
To the same end. But I forgot, my friends;
We have to think of what particular mark
Should first be aim'd at when the blow is struck.

VAN RYK.

So please you, sir, a cast at Van den Bosch
Were not amiss, methinks.

OCCO.

Well shot, Van Ryk;
But yet not quite the bull's eye.

VAN MUCK.

By the mass,
He's shot the bull he had his horns of—Ha!
What will Dame Oda say to thee?

VAN RYK.

Go to!

If that's our archery, Frans Fleisch for thee.

OCCO.

My friends, we'll settle all such scores at will.
But is not Ghent more precious than our wives?
And who debauches her? When she was fain
To creep into her long-left lord's embrace,
Who came at night and whistled her away?
This is the aggravation that most stirs
The choler of the Earl. The other chiefs,
Men that by accidents and long degrees
Became entangled in rebellion,—them
He can forgive; but he that plung'd plump in,
And so new troubled what was settling down,
This is the man that he has mark'd for death.
Whoso brings down that head has hit a mark
That's worth five hundred florins. Ha, my friends!
Who strikes a good stroke with his sword for this?

(*A pause.*)

Van Artevelde must die, you understand me.

(*A pause again.*)

VAN RYK.

Why, if he must, he must, and there's an end.

OCCO.

The Earl must have his life; who hath the guerdon
Is not material save to them that get it.
But truly, were the money on my head,
And I as sure to die as Artevelde,
I'd rather that such men as you should have it,
Than see it snatch'd by luck. When die we must,
'Tis better that thereby good men should thrive
Than snatchers.

VAN RYK.

Saving your displeasure, sir,
'Tis said good men ne'er thrive but by good deeds.
Now, were it but the slaying Van den Bosch,
Or Peter Nuitre, or Frans Ackerman,
There's husbands, widows, orphans, all through Ghent,
Would say the deed was good; but Artevelde
Has, as it were, a creditable name,
And men would say we struck not for revenge,
But only lucre, which were scandalous;
And also, sir—

OCCO.

(*To a* SERVING-MAN, *who enters.*)

What, sirrah?—speak—what now?

(*The* SERVING-MAN *whispers him.*)

Van Artevelde! he is not coming here?

Not now—not now?

SERVING-MAN.

Now, instantly, my lord.

OCCO.

Masters, I wish you both good-day—good-day.

God prosper thee, Van Ryk—Van Muck, farewell.

Why op'st thou not the door, thou villain groom?

Think'st thou the burgesses have time to lose?

Farewell at once, sirs, not to keep you longer

When things are all so stirring in the town.

You're needed at your posts, I know; farewell.

VAN RYK.

My lord, as touching these five hundred florins—

OCCO.

Just as ye will, sirs—any way ye please;

I bid God speed you, and so fare you well.

VAN RYK.

If you would take four hundred from the five,

And set the residue on Van den Bosch,
His head I'd bring you in for that much money,
And Ackerman's for love and pure good-will.

VAN MUCK.

And sir, as touching Artevelde—

OCCO.

Nay, nay,
I will not press it further.

VAN MUCK.

If the florins—

OCCO.

Peace on your lives, he's here!

Enter VAN ARTEVELDE.

ARTEVELDE.

My Lord of Occo, at your pleasure. Ha!
Attended, too, as I could wish to see you.
I'd not desire to see a friend of mine
Better accompanied,—no, nor a foe
Better encountered than by men like these.
Jacob Van Ryk, my father loved you much.

No man knew better, Jacob, than my father,
Who were the worthiest to be lov'd and trusted;
And I, thou seest, have mounted to his seat.
How the old times come back upon me now!
I was a very little prating child
When thou wert wonted to attend my father
Home from the Stadt-house: it was always thou
Whom he would choose from them that brought him home
To ask thy company; and in thine arms
He oft would put me for his more repose,
For I was stillest there. Times change, Van Ryk;
Years shift us up and down; but something sticks;
And for myself, there's nothing as a man
That I love more than what a child I lov'd.
Honest Van Muck, thy hand—thou look'st abash'd—
Ah, thou bethink'st thee of thy little debt,
The money that I lent thee for the close.
Why, what of that, man? Didst thou ever hear
An Artevelde would hurt his friend for gold?
Thy debt is cancell'd—think no more upon it;
Thou shalt look boldly upward in the world
And care for no man. I will settle that
This instant with a writing.

OCCO.

By your leave,
The burgesses are tarried for elsewhere;
They are incontinently going hence.
You will forgive their haste, they cannot stay;
Open the doors. Good-day, sirs, once again.

VAN MUCK.

Master Van Artevelde, I'm more your debtor
Than ever I was yet. The Lord requite you,
And keep you in your perils near at hand!

VAN RYK.

Master Van Artevelde, God bless you, sir!
And give you grace to know and to discern,
And read men's hearts,—the gift your father had.
Look for your friends amongst the commons ever;
An' 'twere not for Lord Occo standing here,
I'd bid you trust in ne'er a lord of Ghent.

[*Exeunt the* CRAFTSMEN.

ARTEVELDE.

(*After a pause, during which he fixes his eyes steadily upon* OCCO, *who maintains an unconcerned demeanour.*)

These are ambiguous knaves.

OCCO.

True craftsmen both!
Ever suspicious of nobility.

ARTEVELDE.

That am I not. You had some news to tell,
So your lieutenant said.

OCCO.

Intelligence
Has reached me of the terms the Earl will offer:
A guarantee of franchises and rights,
Conditional on some three hundred of us
Being delivered over to his mercy.

ARTEVELDE.

Of whom then is this number?

OCCO.

They must be
Whomso' the Earl may please to name hereafter.
The lists are written out, though not divulged;
But, what is worthiest note, upon the file
Your name appears not.

ARTEVELDE.

By my faith, that's strange!
But are these tidings certain?

OCCO.

Beyond doubt.

ARTEVELDE.

How came you by them, if they be so certain?

OCCO.

They're rumour'd—very confidently rumour'd.
I had them also from my spies at Bruges.
A most sagacious spy—he saw the lists;
He never yet deceiv'd me—there's no doubt.

ARTEVELDE.

And what do you advise, if this be truth?

OCCO.

Why, if the town be obstinately bent
On making peace, my counsel to yourself,
Whose life peace places not in jeopardy,
Would be to leave the forward part to us,
Whose only hope of safety is resistance;
So that, if we should fall, you still may stand,
Whatever turn things take. And bear in mind,
If there be danger, and the crafts turn on us,
To throw yourself among the mariners;
There's none of all the crafts so wholly with us.

ARTEVELDE.

With which of us, my lord?

OCCO.

With one and all.

ARTEVELDE.

Aye, say you so? And my part, as you think,
Is to hold back and see you play the game.
My apprehension of a leader's part
Is different from this. I ask'd your counsel,
And I have not unprofitably heard it:
Now I will give you mine, and be you pleased
To profit in like sort, lest worse befal you.
I too have had my spies upon the watch,
And the intelligence they gather'd me
Mentioned some certain renegades and traitors
Who were set down by name. I hereupon
Took order for a numerous company,
Selected for their hardihood and faith,
To be for ever close upon the heels
Of these same traitors at all guild-assemblies,
And use their weapons on a sign from me.
Which matters recommending to your notice,
My counsel to you is to stay at home.

[*Exit.*

(OCCO *looks after him in silence for some time.*
VAN AESWYN *enters.*)

AESWYN.

My lord, Sir Guisebert Grutt is quite impatient,
And sends one message on another's heels
To ask why tarry you?

OCCO.

I am not well.

AESWYN.

But they are setting forth immediately;
The market-place is full to overflowing.

OCCO.

Hark ye! he knows it all.

AESWYN.

Van Artevelde?

OCCO.

Knows every thing.

AESWYN.

And what is to be done?

OCCO.

I'm ill at ease; I know not; what think'st thou?

AESWYN.

If he but knew it half an hour too soon,
His knowledge is of small account.

OCCO.

God's-death!
But I am ignorant how long he's known it—
How many he has practised with and gained—
How many may have falsely seem'd to swerve
By his direction, only to delude,
And so embolden me to my destruction.
I would this hour were past!

AESWYN.

Resolve on something;
Take one part or the other, lest it pass,
And leave you ruin'd both ways.

OCCO.

Ruined! Ruined!
He told me if I ventur'd to the meeting,
His followers should slay me.

AESWYN.

Yours may him;
Tis a fair challenge, let us fight it out.

OCCO.

Why that is bravely said. Then be it so.
Thou shalt have warranty to fight it out;
And if we're beaten, I shall stand prepar'd

To fly to Bruges with such as choose to follow.
And hark you! we will not go empty-handed;
We'll take a prize that's worth a good town's ransom,—
A lady whom thou wot'st of. Pick me out
Ten of the sturdiest of my body-guard,
Van Truckler and Van Linden at their head;
Bid them have horses saddled, and a litter.
Shouldst thou be worsted in the market-place,
I will be nigh thee to protect thy flight
Till thou mayst reach the gates. God prosper thee!

[*Exit.*

AESWYN.

The dastard! when the service is of danger
The follower must lead, and venture all
For him that ventures nothing. Are we fools?

[*Exit.*

SCENE V.

THE HOUSE VAN ARTEVELDE.

ARTEVELDE *in a suit of armour, reclining in a window seat. The* PAGE *is standing by him.*

ARTEVELDE.

Not to be fear'd—Give me my sword! Go forth,
And see what folk be these that throng the street.

[*Exit the* PAGE.

Not to be fear'd is to be nothing here.
And wherefore have I taken up this office,
If I be nothing in it? There they go.

(*Shouts are heard.*)

Of them that pass my house some shout my name,
But the most part pass silently; and once
I heard the cry of 'Flanders and the Lion.'

Re-enter PAGE.

PAGE.

The knights that newly have arriv'd from Bruges
Pass down the streets, my lord, and many with them.

ARTEVELDE.

Give me my cloak and dagger! There, enough—
Thy service is perform'd. Go to thy sports,
But come not near the market-place to-day.

[*Exit* PAGE.

To be the chief of honourable men
Is honour; and if dangerous, yet faith
Still binds them faster as the danger grows.
To be the head of villains,—what is that
But to be mind to an unwholesome body—
To give away a noble human soul
In sad metempsychosis to the brutes,
Whose carrion, else exanimate, but gains
A moment's life from this, then so infects
That all together die the death of beasts.

(*A pause.*)

These hands are spotless yet—
Yea, white as when in infancy they stray'd
Unconscious o'er my mother's face, or closed
With that small grasp which mothers love to feel.
No stain has come upon them since that time—
They have done nothing violent—
Of a calm will untroubled servants they,

And went about their offices, if here
I must not say in purity, in peace.
But he they served,—he is not what he was.

(*A Party pass the window, and a voice cries*
'The Lion for Flanders.')

That cry again!
Sir knights, ye drive me close upon the rocks,
And of my cargo you're the vilest bales;
So overboard with you! What! men of blood!
Can the son better auspicate his arms,
Than by the slaying of who slew the father?
Some blood may flow because that it needs must,
But yours by choice—I'll slay you, and thank God.

Enter VAN DEN BOSCH.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

The common-bell has rung! the knights are there;
Thou must come instantly.

ARTEVELDE.

I come, I come.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

Now, Master Philip, if thou miss thy way

Through this affair, we're lost. For Jesus' sake,
Be counsell'd now by me; have thou in mind—

ARTEVELDE.

Go to, I need not counsel; I'm resolv'd.
Take thou thy stand beside Sir Simon Bette,
As I by Grutt; take note of all I do,
And do thyself accordingly. Come on. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI.

THE EXTERIOR OF THE STADT-HOUSE.

Two external flights of stone stairs meet in a landing place, or platform, midway in the front of the building and level with the first floor. On this platform appear SIR GUISEBERT GRUTT, *with the aldermen of sundry guilds, and the deans of the several crafts of butchers, fishermen, glaziers, and cordwainers. Also* VAN ARTEVELDE, VAN DEN BOSCH, FRANS ACKERMAN, VAN NUITRE, *and others of their party.* SIR GUISEBERT GRUTT *descends some steps, and meets* SIR SIMON BETTE *as he is coming up from the street.*

SIR GUISEBERT GRUTT (*aside to* SIR SIMON BETTE).

God's life, sir! where is Occo?

SIR SIMON BETTE.

Sick, sick, sick.

He has sent word he's sick, and cannot come.

SIR GUISEBERT GRUTT.

Pray God his sickness be the death of him!

SIR SIMON BETTE.

Nay, his lieutenant's here, and has his orders.

VAN DEN BOSCH (*aside to* ARTEVELDE).

I see there's something that hath staggered them.
Now push them to the point. (*Aloud.*) Make way there,
Ho!

ARTEVELDE (*coming forward*).

Some citizen hath brought this concourse here.
Who is the man, and what hath he to say?

SIR GUISEBERT GRUTT.

The noble Earl of Flanders of his grace
Commissions me to speak.

(*Some White-Hoods interrupt him with cries of* 'Ghent,' *on which there is a great tumult, and they are instantly drown'd in the cry of* 'Flanders.')

ARTEVELDE.

What, silence! peace!
Silence, and hear this noble Earl's behests,
Deliver'd by this thrice puissant knight.

SIR GUISEBERT GRUTT.

First will I speak—not what I'm bid to say,
But what it most imports yourselves to hear.
For though ye cannot choose but know it well,
Yet by these cries I deem that some of you
Would, much like madmen, cast your knowledge off,
And both of that and of your reason reft
Run naked on the sword—which to forefend,
Let me *remind* you of the things ye know.
Sirs, when this month began ye had four chiefs
Of great renown and valour,—Jan de Bol,
Arnoul le Clerc, and Launoy and Van Ranst.
Where are they now? and what be ye without them?
Sirs, when the month began ye had good aid
From Brabant, Liege, St. Tron, and Huy and Dinant.
How shall they serve you now? The Earl sits fast
Upon the Quatre-metiers and the Bridge.
What aid of theirs can reach you? What supplies?

I tell you, sirs, that thirty thousand men
Could barely bring a bullock to your gates.
If thus without, how stand you then within?
Ask of your chatelain, the Lord of Occo;
Which worthy knight will tell you—

ARTEVELDE (*aside to* VAN DEN BOSCH).

Mark you that?

(*Then aloud to* SIR GUISEBERT GRUTT.)

Where is this chatelain, your speech's sponsor?

SIR GUISEBERT GRUTT.

He's sick in bed; but were he here, he'd tell you
There's not provision in the public stores
To keep you for a day. Such is your plight.
Now hear the offer of your natural liege.
Mov'd to compassion by our prayers and tears,
Well aided as they were by good Duke Aubert,
My Lady of Brabant, and Lord Compelant—
To whom our thanks are due,—the Earl says thus:
He will have peace, and take you to his love,
And be your good lord as in former days;
And all the injuries, hatreds, and ill-will
He had against you he will now forget,

And he will pardon you your past offences,
And he will keep you in your ancient rights;
And for his love and graces thus vouchsafed
He doth demand of you three hundred men,
Such citizens of Ghent as he shall name,
To be delivered up to his good pleasure.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

Three hundred citizens!

ARTEVELDE.

Peace, Van den Bosch.
Hear we this other knight. Well, worthy sir,
Hast aught to say, or hast not got thy priming,
That thus thou gaspest like a droughty pump?

VAN DEN BOSCH.

Nay, 'tis black bile that chokes him. Come up with it!
Be't but a gallon it shall ease thy stomach.

SEVERAL CITIZENS.

Silence! Sir Simon Bette's about to speak.

SIR SIMON BETTE.

Right worthy burgesses, good men and rich!
Much trouble ye may guess, and strife had we
To win his Highness to this loving humour:
For if ye rightly think, sirs, and remember,

You've done him much offence—not of yourselves,
But through ill guidance of ungracious men.
For first ye slew his bailiff at the cross,
And with the Earl's own banner in his hand,
Which falling down was trampled under foot
Through heedlessness of them that stood about.
Also ye burn'd the castle he lov'd best,
And ravag'd all his parks at Andrehen,
All those delightful gardens on the plain.
And ye beat down two gates at Oudenarde,
And in the dike ye cast them upside down.
Also ye slew five knights of his, and brake
The silver font wherein he was baptized.
Wherefore it must be own'd, sirs, that much cause
He had of quarrel with the town of Ghent.
For how, sirs, had the Earl afflicted you
That ye should thus dishonour him? 'tis true
That once a burgess was detain'd at Erclo
Through misbehaviour of the bailiff; still
He hath delivered many a time and oft
Out of his prisons burgesses of yours
Only to do you pleasure; and when late
By kinsmen of the bailiff whom ye slew,

Some mariners of yours were sorely maim'd,
(Which was an inconvenience to this town)
What did the Earl? To prove it not his act
He banish'd out of Flanders them that did it.
Moreover, sirs, the taxes of the Earl
Were not so heavy, but that, being rich,
Ye might have borne them; they were not the half
Of what ye since have paid to wage this war;
And yet had these been double that were half,
The double would have grieved you less in peace
Than but the half in war. Bethink ye, sirs,
What were the fowage and the subsidies
When bread was but four mites that's now a groat?
All which consider'd, sirs, I counsel you
That ye accept this honourable peace,
For mercifully is the Earl inclin'd,
And ye may surely deem of them he takes
A large and liberal number will be spared
And many here who least expect his love
May find him free and gracious. Sirs, what say ye?

ARTEVELDE.

First, if it be your pleasure, hear me speak.

(*Great tumult, and cries of* 'Flanders!')

What, sirs! not hear me? was it then for this
Ye made me your chief captain yesternight,
To snare me in a trust, whereof I bear
The name and danger only, not the power?

(*The tumult increases.*)

Sirs, if we needs must come to blows, so be it;
For I have friends amongst you who can deal them.

SIR SIMON BETTE (*aside to* SIR GUISEBERT GRUTT.)

Had Occo now been here! but lacking him
It must not come to that.

SIR GUISEBERT GRUTT.

My loving friends,
Let us behave like brethren as we are,
And not like listed combatants. Ho, peace!
Hear this young bachelor of high renown,
Who writes himself your captain since last night,
When a few score of varlets, being drunk,
In mirth and sport so dubbed him. Peace, sirs! hear him.

ARTEVELDE.

Peace let it be, if so ye will; if not,
We are as ready as yourselves for blows.

ONE OF THE CITIZENS.

Speak, master Philip, speak, and you'll be heard.

ARTEVELDE.

I thank you, sirs; I knew it could not be
But men like you must listen to the truth.
Sirs, ye have heard these knights discourse to you
Of your ill fortunes, telling on their fingers
The worthy leaders ye have lately lost.
True, they were worthy men, most gallant chiefs;
And ill would it become us to make light
Of the great loss we suffer by their fall.
They died like heroes; for no recreant step
Had e'er dishonour'd them, no stain of fear,
No base despair, no cowardly recoil.
They had the hearts of freemen to the last,
And the free blood that bounded in their veins
Was shed for freedom with a liberal joy.
But had they guess'd, or could they but have dreamed
The great examples which they died to show
Should fall so flat, should shine so fruitless here,
That men should say 'For liberty these died
Wherefore let us be slaves,'—had they thought this,
Oh, then, with what an agony of shame,
Their blushing faces buried in the dust,
Had their great spirits parted hence for heaven!

What! shall we teach our chroniclers henceforth
To write that in five bodies were contained
The sole brave hearts of Ghent! which five defunct,
The heartless town, by brainless counsel led,
Deliver'd up her keys, stript off her robes,
And so with all humility besought
Her haughty lord that he would scourge her lightly!
It shall not be—no, verily! for now,
Thus looking on you as ye stand before me,
Mine eye can single out full many a man
Who lacks but opportunity to shine
As great and glorious as the chiefs that fell.—
But lo! the Earl is mercifully minded!
And surely if we, rather than revenge
The slaughter of our bravest, cry them shame,
And fall upon our knees, and say we've sinned,
Then will my lord the Earl have mercy on us,
And pardon us our letch for liberty!
What pardon it shall be, if we know not,
Yet Ypres, Courtray, Grammont, Bruges, they know;
For never can those towns forget the day
When by the hangman's hands five hundred men,
The bravest of each guild, were done to death

In those base butcheries that he called pardons.
And did it seal their pardons, all this blood?
Had they the Earl's good love from that time forth?
Oh, sirs! look round you lest ye be deceived;
Forgiveness may be spoken with the tongue,
Forgiveness may be written with the pen,
But think not that the parchment and mouth pardon
Will e'er eject old hatreds from the heart.
There's that betwixt you been which men remember
Till they forget themselves, till all's forgot,
Till the deep sleep falls on them in that bed
From which no morrow's mischief knocks them up.
There's that betwixt you been which you yourselves,
Should ye forget, would then not be yourselves;
For must it not be thought some base men's souls
Have ta'en the seats of yours and turn'd you out,
If in the coldness of a craven heart
Ye should forgive this bloody-minded man
For all his black and murderous monstrous crimes?
Think of your mariners, three-hundred men,
After long absence in the Indian seas
Upon their peaceful homeward voyage bound,
And now, all dangers conquer'd as they thought,

Warping the vessels up their native stream,
Their wives and children waiting them at home
In joy, with festal preparation made,—
Think of these mariners, their eyes torn out,
Their hands chopped off, turn'd staggering into Ghent,
To meet the blasted eye-sight of their friends!
And was not this the Earl? 'Twas none but he,
No Hauterive of them all had dared to do it,
Save at the express instance of the Earl.
And now what asks he? Pardon me, sir knights;
(*To* GRUTT *and* BETTE.)
I had forgotten, looking back and back
From felony to felony foregoing,
This present civil message which ye bring;
Three-hundred citizens to be surrendered
Up to that mercy which I tell you of—
That mercy which your mariners prov'd—which steep'd
Courtray and Ypres, Grammont, Bruges, in blood!
Three hundred citizens,—a secret list,
No man knows who—not one can say he's safe—
Not one of you so humble but that still
The malice of some secret enemy
May whisper him to death—and hark—look to it!

Have some of you seem'd braver than your fellows,
Their courage is their surest condemnation;
They are mark'd men—and not a man stands here
But may be so—Your pardon, sirs, again;

(*To* GRUTT *and* BETTE.)

You are the pickers and the choosers here,
And doubtless you're all safe, ye think—ha! ha!
But we have pick'd and chosen, too, sir knights
What was the law for I made yesterday—
What! is it you that would deliver up
Three-hundred citizens to certain death?
Ho! Van Den Bosch! have at these traitors—hah—

(*Stabs* GRUTT, *who falls.*)

VAN DEN BOSCH.

Die, treasonable dog—is that enough?
Down, felon, and plot treacheries in hell.

(*Stabs* BETTE.)

(*The White-Hoods draw their swords, with loud cries of* 'Treason,' 'Artevelde,' 'Ghent,' *and* 'The Chaperons Blancs.' *A citizen of the other party, who in the former part of the scene had unfurled the Earl's banner, now throws it down and flies; several others are following him, and the aldermen and deans,*

some of whom had been dropping off towards the end of Artevelde's *speech, now quit the platform with precipitation.* VAN AESWYN *is crossed by* VAN DEN BOSCH.)

VAN DEN BOSCH.

Die thou, too, traitor. (*Aiming a blow at him.*)

ARTEVELDE (*warding it off*).

Van Den Bosch, forbear.
Up with your weapons, White-Hoods; no more blood.
These only are the guilty who lie here.
Let no more blood be spilt on pain of death.
Sirs, ye have nought to fear; I say, stand fast;
No man shall harm you; if he does, he dies.
Stand fast, or if ye go, take this word with you,
Philip Van Artevelde is friend with all;
There's no man lives within the walls of Ghent
But Artevelde will look to him and his,
And suffer none to plunder or molest him.
Haste, Van den Bosch! by Heav'n they run like lizards!
Take they not heart the sooner, by St. Paul
They'll fly the city, and that cripples us.
Haste with thy company to the west wards,
And see thou that no violence be done
Amongst the weavers and the fullers—stay—

And any that betake themselves to pillage
Hang without stint—and hark—begone—yet stay;
Shut the west gate, postern, and wicket too,
And catch my Lord of Occo where you can.
Stay—on thy life let no man's house be plundered.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

That is not to my mind; but what of that?
Thou'st play'd the game right boldly, and for me,
My oath of homage binds me to thee.

ARTEVELDE.

Well,
Thou to thy errand then, and I myself
Will go from street to street through all the town,
To reassure the citizens; that done
I'll meet thee here again. Form, White-Hoods, form;
Range ten abreast; I'm coming down amongst you.
You Floris, Leefdale, Spanghen, mount ye here,
And bear me down these bodies. Now, set forth.

(*The White-Hoods, by whose shouts of* 'Artevelde for Ghent' *the latter part of the Scene has been frequently interrupted, now join in a cry of triumph, and carry him off on their shoulders.*)

ACT III.

SCENE I.

Night. A wood in the vicinity of Bruges.

THE LORD OF OCCO AND FOLLOWERS.

OCCO.

No more than half a league to Bruges? then halt,
And let the men at arms be drawn together
Where the ground's open. Berckel, ride thou on
And hail the warders on the walls; make known
That for the love which we have shown the Earl
We're driven forth of Ghent, and humbly crave
His hospitality.

(*To* VAN AESWYN, *who enters.*)

Where is the lady?

AESWYN.

They've dropp'd behind some furlong with the litter.

OCCO.

Keep thou beside her, lest she might prevail

To make the varlets speak. Let none approach
After we pass the gates but men of mine,
Nor ever let the litter be unclos'd.
Now, if we're all in order, march we on.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

A BANQUETTING-HALL IN THE STADT-HOUSE AT BRUGES.

Tables are spread, and the EARL OF FLANDERS, *the* HASE OF FLANDERS, *with several Lords, Knights, and followers of the Earl, are entertained by the Mayor of Bruges, and the Aldermen.*

EARL.

Sir Mayor, we thank you; 'tis a royal feast.

MAYOR.

My gracious lord, the supper is but poor;
Very exceeding poor the supper is;
And yet the most we can; your humble hosts,
Being but meagre citizens God wot,
Can but purvey your highness what they have,
A very sorry supper.

ALDERMAN.

True indeed.

Yet if your highness please to cast it up,
A thousand florins—

MAYOR.

Hold thy peace, Van Holst;
The minstrels twang their cat-gut.

EARL (*aside to the* HASE).

In good time.

If aught could make me cast my supper up,
'Twere to taste further of their courtesies.
Soho, sir minstrel! what hast got to sing?

VAN HOLST.

That matter has been car'd for, please your highness.
We knew your highness had a skilful ear,
And 'twas not every poesy would please you.
This is a ditty craftily conceited,
Trump'd up as 'twere extempore for the nonce.
He was no tavern cantabank that made it,
But a squire minstrel of your highness' court.
So—sing, sir minstrel—there you have it—ah!
Fal-lal—the very thing—the tune's 'Green Sleeves.'

THE MINSTREL SINGS.

The little bird sat on the greenwood tree,
And the sun was as bright as bright could be;
The leaf was broad, the shade was deep,
The Lion of Flanders lay fast asleep.

The little bird sang, 'Sir Lion arise,
For I hear with my ears and I see with my eyes;
And I know what I know, and I tell thee this,
That the men of Ghent have done something amiss.'

From his lair the Lion of Flanders rose,
And he shook his mane and toss'd up his nose;
'Ere a leaf be fallen, or summer be spent,'
Quoth he, 'if God spare me, I'll go to Ghent.

'For a little bird sang, and I dream'd beside,
That the people of Ghent were puff'd up with pride,
And I had been far over hill and dale,
And was fast asleep, and they trod on my tail.'

Ere a leaf was fallen the lion he went,
And growl'd a growl at the gates of Ghent;
But they bended low when they saw him awake,
And said that they trod on his tail by mistake.

The little bird sat on the bush so bare,
Aud the leaf fell brown on the lion's lair
The little bird pick'd a berry so red,
And dropt it down on the lion's head.

'Sir Lion awake, and put out your claws,
And lift your chin from your tawny paws;
My ears are smaller than yours, but more
I hear than you, and worse than before.'

The lion stirred and awoke with a snort,
And swell'd with rage till his breath came short;
'Ere the brown leaf meet with the flake of snow
On the roundabout stair, to Ghent I'll go.

'For a little bird sang, and I dream'd as well,
That the people of Ghent were as false as hell;
Coming by stealth when nought I fear'd,
They trod on my corns and pull'd my beard.'

Ere a snow-flake fell the lion he went,
And roar'd a roar at the gates of Ghent;
The gates they shook, though they were fast barr'd,
And the warders heard it at Oudenarde.

At the first roar ten thousand men
Fell sick to death—he roar'd again,
And the blood of twenty thousand flow'd
On the bridge of Roone, as broad as the road.

Wo worth thee, Ghent! if, having heard
The first and second, thou bidest the third.
Flat stones and awry, grass, potsherd, and shard,
Thy place shall be like an old churchyard

EARL.

A singular good song, and daintily accompanied with the music. Give him three florins, and a denier for the lad withal.

VAN HOLST.

Your highness is too bountiful. He made it not himself. 'Twas your highness's serjeant-minstrel that made it. The making and mending of it together was seven days and nights, bating twelve hours for sleeping, and four hours for eating, and five minutes for saying his prayers. Drinking never stopped him, for still the more he drank, the more he made of it. And he ranted and sang, an' it like your highness, that it would have pleased you to hear him; for being that the song was made in honour of your highness, he said he could sing it a thousand times over, and think better of it every time.

EARL.

It is good poesy—marry and good prophecy too. Hark ye, master mayor; I have some whit repented me that I was wrought upon by those old Knights of Ghent to proffer terms of such easy acquittance.

MAYOR.

When your highness is graciously pleased to give away your advantages, it is not for such as I to say you do wrong; but every man in Bruges, that is well affected to your highness, said that three hundred heads was too little.

EARL.

By my faith they said true; and Gilbert Matthew told me no less; but I was persuaded by the old Knights. I was too easy with them. Where is Gilbert Matthew?

GILBERT MATTHEW.

Here, my lord.

EARL.

Come hither, Gilbert. I have bethought me, Gilbert,
I almost sinned against true chivalry
To let yon rabble off.

GILBERT MATTHEW.

Your highness says it.

EARL.

Thou'dst tell me 'twas not by thy counsel;—well.

GILBERT MATTHEW.

As many heads of each insurgent craft

Would not have been denied. A hundred nailed
Like weasels to the gates of each walled town
Thorough the states of Flanders—that had been
A warning, wholesome and significant
To the good towns.

EARL.

A salutary caution.
I would the bargain were to make again.
Why, so now! who comes here? the good Sir Walter.

Enter SIR WALTER D'ARLON.

D'Arlon, I never see thee but with joy.
What new adventure hast thou been upon?
We miss thee oft at court, but thy return
Is ever with new honours at thy heels.
What captives follow thee to Bruges to-night?
Or hast thou turn'd base metal into gold,
And bring'st their ransoms?—either way is well.

D'ARLON.

My lord, I come alone.

EARL.

Why, still thou'rt welcome.

D'ARLON.

Yet there is something following at my heels,
Which hardly shall your highness in like sort
Make welcome here.

EARL.

Why, say'st thou? what is that?

D'ARLON.

Ill rumours, my good lord.

EARL.

And of what import?

D'ARLON.

The rebels are alive again and fresh.
The messengers of peace lie stabbed to death
Upon the steps i' the market-place.

EARL.

Not so!
It cannot be,—D'Arlon, it must be false.

D'ARLON.

I fear, my lord, it will not so be found.

EARL.

Nay, nay,—so stripped of every thing—so bare
As we had made them—scarce a leader left,
And those that were so all unskilful too!

D'ARLON.

That were an ugly breach if not repair'd.
They've made young Artevelde their chief.

EARL.

God help them!
A man that as much knowledge has of war
As I of brewing mead! God help their souls!
A bookish nursling of the monks—a meacock!

D'ARLON.

My lord, I'm fearful you mistake the man.
If my accounts be true, the life he's led
Serv'd rather in its transit to eclipse
Than to show forth his nature; and, that passed,
You'll now behold him as he truly is,
One of a cold and of a constant mind,
Not quickened into ardent action soon,
Nor prompt for petty enterprise; yet bold,
Fierce when need is, and capable of all things.

EARL.

And hath he slain the knights?

D'ARLON.

With his own hand.

EARL.

I tell thee it is false; it cannot be.

Thou, Gilbert Matthew, how think'st thou o' the tale?

GILBERT MATTHEW.

My lord, it may be there's some stir at Ghent,
Which rumour, floating like a mist before,
Augments to this.

EARL.

Thou deem'st it to be nothing.

GILBERT MATTHEW.

I deem of Ghent as of a fly in winter,
That in a gleam of sunshine creeping forth
Kicks with stiff legs a feeble stroke or two,
And falls upon its back. My lord, 'tis nothing.

EARL.

Gilbert, thy wisdom never was at fault.
Thou art a comfortable councillor.
Sirrah, what tidings? (*To an* ATTENDANT *who enters.*)

ATTENDANT.

Sir, the Lord of Occo
Came with his men at arms before the walls.
Finding that he was driven forth of Ghent
The warders have admitted him, and here
He waits your pleasure.

EARL.

Bid him in at once.

He comes like confirmation. Oh Ghent! Ghent!
Oh ye ungracious people!

Enter THE LORD OF OCCO.

Speak, Sir Guy.
Out with the worst, for I have guess'd it all.
Fame was here first, as breathless as you are.

OCCO.

'Tis the worst fortune ever yet befel me
To be the bearer of this heavy news.
Our friends are slain, the White-Hoods hold the town,
And he, the homicide whose bloody hand
Despatch'd the peaceful knights, is lord of all.

EARL.

Oh that unhappy people! hear me, God!
Hear me ye host of heaven, and all good men!
If e'er I lift the wine-cup to my lips,
If ever other than a soldier's bed
Contain me, or if any pleasant sport
Inveigle off my heart while that town stands,
May I be driven from my royalties
To dwell with beasts like him that sinned of old!
Rise, sirs, and feast no more. My Lord of Occo,
Such entertainment as such times afford

We'll give you. Bid my chamberlain see to it.
Adieu, sirs; when the walls of Ghent lie flat
Our revel we resume.

D'ARLON.

Leave *me*, my lord,
The entertainment of your friends from Ghent.
My house will hold them.—(*Aside.*) Grant me this, my lord;
They need a supervisor.

EARL.

Good;—Sir Guy,
Sir Walter D'Arlon is your host at Bruges.
Adieu, sirs; come to council in the morning
You that are of it. Stand aside, Sir Minstrel—
What, are you blind? Good night, good night, adieu.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

A CHAMBER IN THE LORD OF ARLON'S HOUSE.

ADRIANA VAN MERESTYN, *and three* ATTENDANTS. *in the* LORD OF OCCO'S *livery.*

ADRIANA.

Where have ye brought me to? What house is this?
Nay must I ask for ever? Wilt not speak?

Nor thou, nor thou? If ye are bid be dumb,
But say ye are so, and I'll ask no more.

FIRST ATTENDANT.

Madam, we are.

ADRIANA.

Who bid you?—Not a word?
If you're afraid to tell me, make a sign.
Was it the Lord of Occo?

(*First Attendant shakes his head.*)

'Twas not he.
Then whosoe'er enjoined it, send him here;
Entreat him were it but for courtesy
To come to me. He that hath tied your tongues
May loose them, or may hold his own unfettered.
I pray thee send him; thou art not so rude,
To guess thee by thy mien, as this so slight
So slender service to deny me—no—
Or else thou wear'st a mask.

(*The first Attendant goes out. She turns aside from the others.*)

Befriend me now,
Heart, head, and tongue; be bold, be wise, be ready!
Oh for some potion that for one hour's space
Should make me calm and strong!

Enter VAN AESWYN.

AESWYN (*to the Attendants.*)

Depart the chamber.

[*Exeunt the Attendants.*

ADRIANA.

Master Van Aeswyn!

AESWYN.

Madam!

ADRIANA.

It is thou

That thus abusest me!

AESWYN.

I, Madam! No.

I have done nothing; if a wrong there be,
It lies with others; I have but obeyed
Whom I am bound to serve.

ADRIANA.

Alas! thy guilt

Is but more abject, being ministrant
Unto another's, and thyself no less
Accountable to heaven. His lust and greed
Whom thou abettest, thou dost make thine own,
And nothing gett'st but wages of thy service
To pay thy sin. What! is't not shame on shame!

Thou puttest thine immortal soul to sale
For profit of another, thy reward
Being the sorry guerdon of a squire,
With blot and stain of such addition vile
Of countenance and favour, bred of guilt,
As he that uses thee may please to show thee:
Favour, that coming from so soiled a source,
And for such soil of service, if well weighed,
Less of reward than punishment should taste,
And less of honourable show should wear,
Than show of reprehension. Thou to stamp
A gentle name with stigma of such deeds!
Oh curse of bad men's hire!

AESWYN.

Nay, madam, nay;
'Tis not for hire, neither for countenance:
But I have taken service with this lord,
And by the law of arms—

ADRIANA.

What law is that?
'Tis not the law of God, nor yet above it.

AESWYN.

An honest squire is bound by plighted faith,

And by the law of arms, to execute
His lord's behests.

ADRIANA.

Though they be base and foul?
Oh Sin! what thread or filament so fine
Of casual consent, of compact void,
Slipt in betwixt 'God save you' and 'good morrow,'
That's not a warrant of authority
To bind a man to thee! to thee, glib Sin!
But Virtue! where is that indissolute chain
Which to thy anchored mandaments eterne
The floating soul shall grapple! Law of arms!
Grant 'twere that law supernal it is not,
Yet dost thou break it: for all wrongs to women
Stand in its code denounced.

AESWYN.

By all that's just
The deed misliked me from the first; three times
I prayed his lordship to bethink himself
What quittance he should hazard, and what blame,
In wronging of so rich and good a lady;
But still he said the Earl should bring him through
Let come what might; insisting that by law

You were in wardship, and His Grace might grant
Your hand to whom was fittest.

ADRIANA.

Oh blind craft!
Oh frail inventions of humanity!
Me shall no earthly prince nor potentate
Toss like a morsel of his broken meat
To any supplicant. Be they avised
I am in wardship to the King of Kings;
God and my heart alone dispose of me.

AESWYN.

Madam, I would it were so.

ADRIANA.

Say, besides,
The Earl should cast the mantle of his power
Over thy master, what shall cover thee,
That canst not borrow greatness for the cloak
Of evil deeds, from naked, manifest shame?
Lo, here I stand in jeopardy and fear,
Weak, trembling, sick at heart, and wearied so
With perturbation, and with pain so racked,
That I have lost my patience, and for hours
Have pray'd for God's deliverance through death;

Yet rather would I, yea, far rather, live
A dateless life of anguish such as this;
Rather live out my reason thus, and twist
For restless years upon a bed-rid couch,
With the sole sense of dotage and distress,
Than change with thee and take upon my soul
Thy forfeiture, and lodge within my breast
That worm of memory which to-day shall breed,
And which upon thy death-bed shall not die,
But being of the soul, shall be immortal!
Go—God forgive thee! for not mine the heart
That would invoke a curse.

AESWYN.

Lady, I swear
I bore a part not willingly in this;
And could I, without ruin of my fortunes,
Do aught that should redeem it——

ADRIANA.

For thy fortunes
Trust them to me.

Enter one of the Attendants.

ATTENDANT.

My lord is at the gate,
And asks for you. [*Exit.*

ADRIANA.

I say, trust them to me;
Do to thyself the justice to renounce
This false knight's service, and to me one act
Of loyalty: seek out with instant haste
The Lord of Arlon; tell him I am here
In tribulation, and beseech his aid,
And bid him by the love he bears his lady,
To grant it me with speed. Wilt thou do this?

AESWYN.

Madam, I will.

ADRIANA.

Go now then to thy lord,
Lest he suspect thy tarriance. I, meanwhile,
Will to the inner chamber make retreat,
Where I shall watch and pray till shall be seen
The issue of thine errand. Hark! they call thee.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

AN ANTE-CHAMBER IN THE EARL'S PALACE.

SIR WALTER D'ARLON *and* GILBERT MATTHEW.

GILBERT MATTHEW.

No sooner had his highness reach'd the palace
Than he sends back for me.

D'ARLON.

And me the same.

GILBERT MATTHEW.

His highness is not happy.

D'ARLON.

That is likely,
But have you any private cause to think it?

GILBERT MATTHEW.

I have observed that when he is not happy
He sends for me.

D'ARLON.

And do you mend his mood?

GILBERT MATTHEW.

Nay, what I can. His highness at such times
Is wishful to be counsell'd to shed blood.

D'ARLON.

'Tis said that he is counsell'd oft to that.

GILBERT MATTHEW.

It is my duty to advise his highness
With neither fear nor favour. As I came,
The bodies of three citizens lay stretch'd
Upon the causeway.

D'ARLON.

How had they been killed?

GILBERT MATTHEW.

By knocking on the head.

D'ARLON.

And who had done it?

GILBERT MATTHEW.

The officers that walk'd before the Earl
To make him room to pass. The streets were full,
And many of the mean-crafts roamed about
Discoursing of the news they heard from Ghent;
And as his highness pass'd they misbehaved,
And three were knocked upon the head with staves.
I knew by that his highness was not happy.
I knew I should be sent for.

Enter an USHER *from an inner chamber.*

USHER.

Ho! Master Gilbert Matthew to his highness.

(*Re-enters the chamber, followed by* GILBERT MATTHEW.)

D'ARLON.

There's some men of their bloody counsels boast,
As though the heart were difficult to harden.

Enter an ATTENDANT.

ATTENDANT.

My lord, a gentleman has come in haste
To seek you. I inform'd him you were here
In waiting on his highness, but he still
Insisted you would see him, did you know
The matter and its urgency.

D'ARLON.

His name?

ATTENDANT.

Van Aeswyn.

D'ARLON.

What! Sir Guy of Occo's squire?

ATTENDANT.

The same, my lord.

D'ARLON.

Yes, yes, the man I know,
But not the matter that he hath with me.
Unless it be some difference with my steward
About his quarters.

ATTENDANT.

Something else than that.

Re-enter the USHER.

USHER.

The lord of Arlon to his highness.

D'ARLON.

Well;
Say to Van Aeswyn, when I leave the earl
I'll see him.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.

A CHAMBER IN THE EARL'S PALACE.

The EARL *and* GILBERT MATTHEW.

EARL.

And thus, if all that we have heard be true,
Last night's ill news this morning somewhat betters.
There's reason to surmise these granaries
Were not destroyed by chance, and the same hand
Which did us this good service may do more.
Meantime we'll pray duke Aubert and the bishop
To let no victual pass their lands to Ghent.

GILBERT MATTHEW.

You shall do well, my lord. I know that people.
No poison works so wastingly amongst them
As a low diet—yea, it brings them down.
There'll be a hundred thousand mouths in Ghent
Gaping like callow jackdaws. Ah! I know them.
The men of battle are full feeders all;

By the strong hand they live, and help themselves
With griping of the rest. When famine comes
'Tis worse to those, seeing that theretofore
They were too gross of body, worse to these,
For they were pinched already.

EARL.

That is true.

GILBERT MATTHEW.

Yea, Sir, I know the White-Hoods. Wait awhile,
And when they feel the vulture in their gut
They shall be busy whetting of their beaks.
Wait till they hunger, and not two in Ghent
Shall be of one opinion.

EARL.

In God's time
Distress shall breed dissensions as thou say'st.
We'll trust to that, and therefore have great heed
To block them out from access of provision.
The country is well wasted thereabouts,
And what they get must travel far to reach them.
We must shut up the roads from Liege and Brabant.

Enter THE LORD OF ARLON.

D'ARLON.

My lord, I do beseech you make me quit
Of Occo for my guest, and give us leave
For instant combat.

EARL.

Walter, art thou mad?
What is thy quarrel with the Lord of Occo?
He is since yesterday, with thy good leave,
Our very worthy friend.

D'ARLON.

My lord, my lord,
He is since yesterday, if not before,
The very lewdest villain that was e'er
A stain to knighthood.

EARL.

Say'st thou so?—go to;
What are thy reasons?

D'ARLON.

With a violent hand
He carried off from Ghent a noble lady,

Whose honour he attempted yesternight
Beneath my roof: and here on her behalf,
And on my own, your highness I entreat
That you give order to have lists prepared,
Where I may meet the miscreant spear to spear,
And do God's will upon him.

EARL.

Soft, my son;
I'll have no fighting for a private cause
Till Ghent be down. I cannot spare a spear,
And this were but an idle cause at best
For breaking one. The honest dames of Ghent
Have scarce deserved protection at our hands;
And when the time shall come, as come it will,
That Ghent is storm'd and sack'd, they'll have no more
Than their deserts: free quarters shall they give
To lusty knight, hot squire, and man at arms.
Shall they not, Gilbert?

GILBERT MATTHEW.

Sir, the dames of Ghent
Must look for worse than what your highness hints.

EARL.

Why then my Lord of Occo sinned not much
To seize occasion by the forelock,—ha?

GILBERT MATTHEW.

My lord, he did but what was just and right.

D'ARLON.

Peace, Master Gilbert Matthew—stand apart;
I seek an audience direct and free,
No craft of juggling renegade betwixt
To interpose, and toss me to and fro
The words that please him or that please him not.
My lord, you know what service I have done,
And with what voluntary heart, not bound
By duty or allegiance to bear arms,
For in my native land the while was peace.
I scarce am call'd a man, and service yet
I count by years, nor leave a winter out.
I was the nursling of your camp, my lord,
And played with weapons, ere my hands had strength
To lift an iron basnet to my head.
The war-horse neigh'd to see me when my legs
His breadth of back bestrided scarce aslope,
And rarely hath it been from that time forth
That I have housed when men at arms were mounted.
This it befits me not to say, my lord,
Save for the just conclusion: I entreat
That if it square not with your purposes

To grant the combat which I claim with Occo,
I then have leave to fold my banner up,
And quit your camp.

EARL.

Come, Walter, come, you're foolish;
When cause and opportunity are rife
For reasonable fighting, we might well
Dispense with all knight-errantry. Go to;
See the moon out, and if thy humour hold
It shall have way; the next that shines, I trust,
Shall cast upon the battered walls of Ghent
A thorough light.

D'ARLON.

And if I live to see it
I'll claim the combat. Fare you well, my lord.

[*Exit.*

EARL.

Was ever man, with denizens for foes
And foreigners for friends, so plagued as I!
My bravest knight would cast away his life
To do me a disservice, with more zeal
Than he was used to serve me with: denied,

Straight he shall tell me he was born elsewhere
And owes me no allegiance.

GILBERT MATTHEW.

By your leave,
I could not wish your highness better fortune,
Than that the fools you count amongst your friends
Were numbered with your foes,—or with the dead.

Enter ATTENDANT.

ATTENDANT.

According to the summons, please your highness,
The lords are met in council.

EARL.

I shall come.
Attend me, Gilbert, when the board breaks up
And thou shalt know the issue. Come to dinner.
And sirrah, tell the butler that to day
I shall drink brandy. From all use of wine
I'm interdicted by a sacred vow,
Till Ghent's submission free me. May't be soon!

[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

GHENT.

The platform at the top of the steeple of St. Nicholas' church. Time, day-break.

ARTEVELDE (*alone*).

There lies a sleeping city. God of dreams!
What an unreal and fantastic world
Is going on below!
Within the sweep of yon encircling wall,
How many a large creation of the night,
Wide wilderness and mountain, rock and sea,
Peopled with busy transitory groups,
Finds room to rise, and never feels the crowd!
—If when the shows had left the dreamers' eyes
They should float upward visibly to mine,
How thick with apparitions were that void!
But now the blank and blind profundity

Turns my brain giddy with a sick aversion
—I have not slept. I am to blame for that.
Long vigils, joined with scant and meagre food,
Must needs impair that promptitude of mind,
And cheerfulness of spirit, which, in him
Who leads a multitude, is past all price.
I think I could redeem an hour's repose
Out of the night that I have squandered, yet.
The breezes, launch'd upon their early voyage,
Play with a pleasing freshness on my face.
I will enfold my cloak about my limbs
And lie where I shall front them;—here I think.

(*He lies down.*)

If this were over——blessed be the calm
That comes to me at last! A friend in need
Is nature to us, that when all is spent,
Brings slumber——bountifully——whereupon
We give her sleepy welcome——if all this
Were honourably over——Adriana—

(*Falls asleep, but starts up almost instantly.*)

I heard a hoof, a horse's hoof I'll swear,
Upon the road from Bruges,—or did I dream?
No! 'tis the gallop of a horse at speed.

VAN DEN BOSCH (*without*).

What ho! Van Artevelde!

ARTEVELDE.

Who calls?

VAN DEN BOSCH (*entering*).

'Tis I.

Thou art an early riser, like myself;
Or is it that thou hast not been to bed?

ARTEVELDE.

What are thy tidings?

VAN DEN BOSCH.

Nay, what can they be?
A page from pestilence and famine's day-book;
So many to the pest-house carried in,
So many to the dead-house carried out.
The same dull, dismal, damnable old story.

ARTEVELDE.

Be quiet; listen to the westerly wind,
And tell me if it bring thee nothing new.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

Nought to my ear, save howl of hungry dog
That hears the house is stirring—nothing else.

ARTEVELDE.

No,—now—I hear it not myself—no—nothing.
The city's hum is up—but ere you came
'Twas audible enough.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

In God's name, what?

ARTEVELDE.

A horseman's tramp upon the road from Bruges.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

Why then be certain, 'tis a flag of truce!
If once he reach the city we are lost.
Nay, if he be but seen, our danger's great.
What terms so bad they would not swallow now?
Let's send some trusty varlets forth at once
To cross his way.

ARTEVELDE.

And send him back to Bruges?

VAN DEN BOSCH.

Send him to hell—and that's a better place.

ARTEVELDE.

Nay, softly, Van Den Bosch; let war be war,
But let us keep its ordinances.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

Tush!

I say, but let them see him from afar,
And in an hour shall we, bound hand and foot,
Be on our way to Bruges.

ARTEVELDE.

Not so, not so.

My rule of governance has not been such
As e'er to issue in so foul a close.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

What matter by what rule thou may'st have governed?
Think'st thou a hundred thousand citizens
Shall stay the fury of their empty maws
Because thou'st ruled them justly?

ARTEVELDE.

It may be
That such a hope is mine.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

Then thou art mad,
And I must take this matter on myself. (*is going.*)

ARTEVELDE.

Hold, Van Den Bosch; I say this shall not be.
I must be madder than I think I am

Ere I shall yield up my authority,
Which I abuse not, to be used by thee.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

This comes of lifting dreamers into power.
I tell thee, in this strait and stress of famine,
The people, but to pave the way for peace,
Would instantly despatch our heads to Bruges.
Once and again I warn thee that thy life
Hangs by a thread.

ARTEVELDE.

Why, know I not it does!
What hath it hung by else since Utas' eve?
Did I not by mine own advised choice
Place it in jeopardy for certain ends?
And what were these? To prop thy tottering state?
To float thee o'er a reef, and, that performed,
To cater for our joint security?
No, verily; not such my high ambition.
I bent my thoughts on yonder city's weal;
I looked to give it victory and freedom;
And working to that end, by consequence
From one great peril did deliver thee—
Not for the love of thee or of thy life,

Which I regard not, but the city's service;
And if for that same service it seem good,
I will expose thy life to equal hazard.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

Thou wilt?

ARTEVELDE.

I will.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

Oh, Lord! to hear him speak,
What a most mighty emperor of puppets
Is this that I have brought upon the board!
But how if he that made it should unmake?

ARTEVELDE.

Unto His sovereignty who truly made me
With infinite humility I bow!
Both, both of us are puppets, Van Den Bosch;
Part of the curious clock-work of this world,
We scold, and squeak, and crack each other's crowns;
And if by twitches mov'd from wires we see not,
I were to toss thee from this steeple's top,
I should be but the instrument—no more—
The tool of that chastising Providence

Which doth exalt the lowly, and abase
The violent and proud: but let me hope
Such is not mine appointed task to-day.
Thou passest in the world for worldly-wise:
Then seeing we must sink or swim together,
What can it profit thee, in this extreme
Of our distress, to wrangle with me thus
For my supremacy and rule? Thy fate,
As of necessity bound up with mine,
Must needs partake my cares: let that suffice
To put thy pride to rest till better times.
Contest—more reasonably wrong—a prize
More precious than the ordering of a shipwreck.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

Tush, tush, Van Artevelde; thou talk'st and talk'st,
And honest burghers think it wondrous fine.
But thou might'st easilier with that tongue of thine
Persuade yon smoke to fly i' the face o' the wind,
Than talk away my wit and understanding.
I say yon herald shall not enter here.

ARTEVELDE.

I know, sir, no man better, where my talk

Is serviceable singly, where it needs
To be by acts enforced. I say, beware,
And brave not mine authority too far.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

Hast thou authority to take my life?
What is it else to let yon herald in
To bargain for our blood?

ARTEVELDE.

Thy life again!
Why what a very slave of life art thou!
Look round about on this once populous town;
Not one of these innumerous house-tops
But hides some spectral form of misery,
Some peevish, pining child and moaning mother,
Some aged man that in his dotage scolds
Not knowing why he hungers, some cold corse
That lies unstraightened where the spirit left it.
Look round, and answer what thy life can be
To tell upon the balance of such scales.
I too would live—I have a love for life—
But rather than to live to charge my soul
With one hour's lengthening out of woes like these,

I'd leap this parapet with as free a bound
As e'er was school-boy's o'er a garden wall.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

I'd like to see thee do it.

ARTEVELDE.

I know thou wouldst;
But for the present be content to see
My less precipitate descent; for lo!
There comes the herald o'er the hill. [*Exit.*

VAN DEN BOSCH.

Beshrew thee!
Thou shalt not have the start of me in this.

[*He follows, and the scene closes.*

SCENE II.

THE HOUSE VAN ARTEVELDE.

URSEL, VAN RYK, *and* VAN MUCK.

URSEL.

He will be here for his breakfast anon.

VAN RYK.

And call you this his breakfast?

URSEL.

An ounce of horseflesh and half an oaten cake. It is his only meal; and if I were to make it larger, he would ne'er look at it.

VAN MUCK.

Why we ourselves fare better.

VAN RYK.

I fare somewhat better, and for thee, thou wouldst make a famine where there was none. No more than this morsel of meat in four-and-twenty hours!

URSEL.

No more; and if he hath been abroad, 'tis more than likely that he shall bring home some little child, or some sick woman to share it with him.

VAN RYK.

It is wonderful how stout he is withal. Some men shall but bite their nails, and their belly's full.

VAN MUCK.

There is a difference in men. I might eat the four hoofs of an ox, and my stomach should droop you, look you, and flap you, look you, like an empty sail. Here he comes.

Enter VAN ARTEVELDE.

VAN ARTEVELDE.

A herald, sirs, is coming here from Bruges.
To horse, Van Muck, to horse, with Swink and Kloos,
And any other of thy readiest men,
And bring him safely in. What ails thee, man?

VAN MUCK.

Sir, saving your displeasure, Swink and Kloos
Against your express orders, and despite
Of much I said myself, have eat their horses.

ARTEVELDE.

Thou sayest not so; God's vengeance on their stomachs!
Next horse they kill, my cook shall serve it up,
And melt the shoes for sauce.
To horse thyself then, with what men are mounted,
And see that no mishap befal the herald.

VAN MUCK.

Sir, at your pleasure.

ARTEVELDE.

And beware, Van Muck.
Some there may be of evil-minded men

Who would do outrage to the city's honour,
And harm the herald. Look thou keep him safe.

VAN MUCK.

Sir, safe he shall be, whosoe'er would harm him.

[*Exit.*

CLARA *enters, but remains behind.*

ARTEVELDE.

And now, Van Ryk, I have a charge for thee.
Thou in the porch of Old St. Nicholas Church
Art to mount guard beside the postern-gate
Which leads upon the stair that climbs the steeple.
Betake thee thither, and until I come,
Inward or outward let none pass the wicket.

(*Turning to Clara.*)

How fares my sister? nay—come hither, Clara.

CLARA.

No nearer, Philip, for I breathe contagion.

ARTEVELDE.

What, com'st thou from the hospital?

CLARA.

Straight thence.
God help me for a pestilent little fool!

I tend the sick from weary day to day,
Though Heaven has set its face against a cure,
And they that should have thank'd me for my pains
Will never more speak word.

ARTEVELDE.

Thou heed'st not that.
No, I am certain 'tis for no man's thanks
That thou hast toil'd; and let them live or die,
Thou hast thine own reward.
Much hast thou merited, my sister dear,
Since these disastrous times have fallen upon us.
In easier hours it may be I had cause
This time or that, to wish thy boldness less,
Though trusting still that time, which tempers all,
Would bring thee soberer thoughts and tame thy heart.
What time to tardy consummation brings,
Calamity, most like a frosty night
That ripeneth the grain, completes at once.
But now that we're alone,——not gone, Van Ryk?

VAN RYK.

Sir, to speak freely, had it been your pleasure
To put me to a service of more action,
I had not sham'd the choice; for though I'm old,—

ARTEVELDE.

Tut, tut, Van Ryk; 'twill come, the time will come,
And action to thy heart's content thou'lt have.
But now begone.

VAN RYK.

Whate'er your bidding be,
My poor endeavours shall be done toward it.

[*Exit.*

ARTEVELDE.

Now render me account of what befell,
Where thou hast been to-day.

CLARA.

It is but little.
I paid a visit first to Ukenheim,
The man who whilome saved our father's life,
When certain Clementists and ribald folk
Assail'd him at Malines. He came last night,
And said he knew not if we owed him aught,
But if we did, a peck of oatmeal now
Would pay the debt, and save more lives than one.
I went. It seem'd a wealthy man's abode;
The costly drapery and good house-gear
Had, in an ordinary time, betokened

That with the occupant the world went well.
By a low couch, curtain'd with cloth of frieze,
Sat Ukenheim, a famine-stricken man,
With either bony fist upon his knees,
And his long back upright. His eyes were fix'd
And mov'd not, though some gentle words I spake:
Until a little urchin of a child
That call'd him father, crept to where he sat
And pluck'd him by the sleeve, and with its small
And skinny finger pointed: then he rose,
And with a low obeisance, and a smile
That look'd like watery moonlight on his face,
So pale and weak a smile, he bade me welcome.
I told him that a lading of wheat-flour
Was on its way, whereat, to my surprise,
His countenance fell, and he had almost wept.

ARTEVELDE.

Poor soul! and wherefore?

CLARA.

That I soon perceived.
He pluck'd aside the curtain of the couch,
And there two children's bodies lay composed.
They seem'd like twins of some ten years of age,

And they had died so nearly both together
He scarce could say which first: and being dead,
He put them, for some fanciful affection,
Each with its arm about the other's neck,
So that a fairer sight I had not seen
Than those two children, with their little faces
So thin and wan, so calm, and sad, and sweet.
I look'd upon them long, and for awhile
I wish'd myself their sister, and to lie
With them in death as they did with each other;
I thought that there was nothing in the world
I could have lov'd so much; and then I wept.
And when he saw I wept, his own tears fell,
And he was sorely shaken and convulsed,
Through weakness of his frame and his great grief.

ARTEVELDE.

It was a thousand pities he deferred
So long to ask our aid.

CLARA.

It was indeed.
But whatsoe'er had been his former pride,
He seem'd a humbled and heart-broken man.
He thank'd me much for what I said was sent;
But I knew well his thanks were for my tears.

He look'd again upon the children's couch,
And said, low down, they wanted nothing now.
So, to turn off his eyes,
I drew the small survivor of the three
Before him, and he snatched it up, and soon
Seemed quite forgetful and absorbed. With that
I stole away.

ARTEVELDE.

There is a man by fate
Fitted for any enterprise of danger.
Alas! of many such I have the choice.
Well; next thou passedst to the hospital?

CLARA.

With Father John; but here he comes himself,
No doubt to bring you tidings of the sick.

Enter FATHER JOHN OF HEDA.

ARTEVELDE.

What cheer, good father?

FATHER JOHN.

Heavy is my cheer;
What else but heavy, when from day to day
I see still more of suffering sinking men

Pass to the chok'd church-yard.

ARTEVELDE.

Truly the sight
Must needs bring on a heaviness of cheer.
I am to blame to think of that no sooner.
Who waits? Too many things conspire—who waits?

Enter STEWARD.

Repair thee to the captains of the guards,
And give my orders that from this time forth
No funerals be allowed till after dark.

[*Exit* STEWARD.

And so the sickness spreads?

FATHER JOHN.

It spreads apace.
Since Egypt's plagues did never rage disease
So sore, and so invincible by art;
So varied in its forms and in its signs,
So unintelligibly strange: in some
The fever keeps its course from first to last;
In others intermits: here suddenly
The patient's head is seiz'd with racking pains;
Then shift they to his chest, with change as quick,

Then to his loins, and strangury succeeds,
With clammy sweat, hard breathing, and hot thirst.
The intervals of pain, if such there be,
Afford him no repose, but he is still
Dejected, restless, of a hopeless mind,
Indifferent to all incidents and objects,
Or in his understanding too confused
To see or apprehend them: first the face
Is red and flush'd, with large and fiery eyes;
Then is it dropsical, and deathy pale.
Sometimes such shudderings seize upon the frame
That the bed shakes beneath it, and with that
The breath is check'd with sobbings as from cold.
Then comes a thick dark crust upon the lips,
And tongue, and teeth; the fatal hiccough next.
Some die in struggles and strong agonies;
Some in a lethargy; whilst others wake
As from a dream, shake off the fit, look round,
And with collected senses and calm speech
Tell the by-standers that their hour is come.

ARTEVELDE.

It is a dismal malady, and this,
Like all our thousand miseries beside,

Demands a remedy that kills or cures.
What wild beasts' yells are these?

(*Tumult and shouting without. The* PAGE *enters.*)

Henry, what news?

PAGE.

The man from Bruges, escorted by Van Muck,
Is coming here, with crowds of people wild
To hear what message he may bring. Van Muck
Forbids that any word should pass his lips
Till he have speech of you.

ARTEVELDE.

Van Muck is right.

PAGE.

But oh! you never saw such wrathful men!
They'll tear them both to pieces.

ARTEVELDE.

Have no fear.
Van Muck will make his way. Aye, here they come.

PAGE.

The man has enter'd by the other door;
I see him not amongst them.

CLARA.

He is here.

Enter VAN MUCK *and* VAN AESWYN.

ARTEVELDE.

What! this the messenger? now by the rood!
Either mine eyes are treacherous as himself,
Or else I see a follower of that false
Dishonour'd knight, and perjured knave, Van Occo.
How is it, if he dares to send thee here,
That thou hast dared to come?

AESWYN.

Under your favour
The Lord of Occo, sir——

ARTEVELDE.

I'm bound by oath,
If I survive this hapless city's siege,
That instant to pursue the traitorous villain
By day and night, o'er mountain and o'er plain,
Through solitudes or cities, land or sea,
Though he should fly me to the ends o' the earth,
And never cease from seeking and pursuing,
Till I shall set my heel upon his neck.
What dost thou here?

AESWYN.

I come not here from him,

For since he made his war upon a damsel,
I have renounc'd his service; more than that,
I to the Lord of Arlon did that errand
Which wrought to her deliverance.

ARTEVELDE.

Aha!
I crave your pardon. I had heard 'twas you,
Though it escaped me. Tell your tale; but first
What tidings of that lady?

AESWYN.

She remains
By her own will, sir, in the knightly hands
Of my good Lord of Arlon.

ARTEVELDE.

Say no more;
Elsewhere I would not wish her.

(*The tumult increases without, and Artevelde's name is called repeatedly.*)

Let me now
Dismiss this noisy and impatient herd
That throng my doors, and then—ho! hark ye, steward,
Conduct Van Aeswyn to my private chamber.

[*Exeunt all but* ARTEVELDE *and* CLARA.

My Clara, we have here a busy day;

Perhaps I shall not see thee, love, again
Till after nightfall; but I will not lose
Thy good-night kiss, so give it to me now.

(*She looks in his face for a moment doubtfully, then falls upon his neck, kisses, and quits him. In the mean time the clamour without increases.* ARTEVELDE *passes into an external gallery, which overlooks the street, and is heard addressing the people.*)

ARTEVELDE.

Hence to the Stadt-house, friends; I'll meet you there,
And either bring the messenger himself,
Or tell you of his tidings: hence—begone.

(*The noise subsides as the people disperse;* ARTEVELDE *passes over the stage; and the scene closes.*)

SCENE III.

BEFORE THE STADT-HOUSE, AS IN THE LAST SCENE OF THE SECOND ACT.

The people assemble. FRANS ACKERMAN *and* PETER VAN NUITRE *in front.*

ACKERMAN.

'Tis certain something hath befallen him.

VAN NUITRE.

But where? He might be found, if so it were.

ACKERMAN.

Hast sought him at Jozyne's estaminet?

VAN NUITRE.

There, and at every lodgment in the city.
Old mother Van den Bosch was confident
He went forth early to Van Artevelde's.

ACKERMAN.

Sure nothing can have happen'd to him there.

VAN NUITRE.

That's what I doubt. The best will have their failings.
They were not in such unison of mind
As might have been desired.

ACKERMAN.

I cannot think it.
But this day's business shall proceed no farther
Until the truth appear. Soft! now he comes.

(VAN ARTEVELDE *enters. There is a dead silence. He walks slowly, and with a mournful appearance, up the steps of the platform.*)

ARTEVELDE.

Are we all here?

ONE FROM THE CROWD.

What's left of us is here,—
Our bones.

ARTEVELDE.

We're wasted in the flesh, 'tis true;
But we have spirits left. We all are here.

ACKERMAN.

I will say nay to that. Where's Van den Bosch?

ARTEVELDE.

Silence! Frans Ackerman; we want not him.

ACKERMAN.

Then I demand if he be dead or living.

ARTEVELDE.

He lives.

ACKERMAN.

Where is he, then?

ARTEVELDE.

Where all shall be
Who seek, by mutiny against their chief,
To do unlawful deeds. What ask ye more?
He is arrested, and confined.

ACKERMAN.

What cause
For this proceeding hath that brave man given?

ARTEVELDE.

If, as his friend, thou ask wherein he erred,
I'll tell it to this people and to thee,—
Not, mark you me, as rendering account,
For that were needless,—but of free good-will.
Sirs, Van den Bosch insisted, in despite
Of all dissuasion, all authority,
The messenger from Bruges should be waylaid
And put to death—yea, nothing less would serve,—
That so the tidings which I'm here to tell
Might never reach your ears. To place restraint
Upon this obstinate humour, and give scope
To your deliberations, for awhile
He is in duress. Are ye well content?

MANY VOICES.

Content, content. The tidings, what are they?

ARTEVELDE.

Frans Ackerman, thou hear'st what cause constrained
Me, much reluctant, thus to use thy friend.
Art thou content?

ACKERMAN.

I am.

ARTEVELDE.

So far is well.

And we set forth unanimous, to end
I trust no otherwise. Fair sirs of Ghent!
Van Aeswyn, the ambassador from Bruges,
Comes with credentials from the earl, to show
What mind he bears toward you. Bitterer words
Did never Christian man to Christians send.
But we are fallen, my friends, and vain it were
For us to quarrel with the proud man's scorn.
Then to the matter take ye heed alone,
And trouble not your hearts for aught beside.
He will admit you to no terms but these,—
That every man and woman born in Ghent
Shall meet him on the road, half way to Bruges,
Bare-footed, and bare-headed, in their shirts,
With halters on their necks, and there kneel down,
And place their lives and chattels at his mercy.
This if ye do not now, he's sworn an oath
That he will never hearken to you more,
But famine shall consume you utterly,
And in your desolate town he'll light a flame
That shall not be extinguished. Speak your minds.
Will ye accept the proffer'd terms, or no?

BURGHERS.

Give us your counsel. Tell us what is best.

ARTEVELDE.

What can I say? You know that as you are
You cannot live. Death opens every door,
And sits in every chamber by himself.
If what might feed a sparrow should suffice
For soldiers' meals, ye have not wherewithal
To linger out three days. For corn, there's none;
A mouse imprison'd in your granaries
Were starved to death. And what then should I say?
Why truly this: that whatsoe'er men's plight
There is a better and a worser way,
If their discretion be not overthrown
By force of their calamities. Three things
Ye have to choose of. You may take his terms,
And go with halters round your necks to Loo.
You will be then his servants and his wealth,
The labourers of his vineyard; and I deem,
Although a haughty lord he be, and cruel,
That he will have the sense to spare his own,
When vengeance hath been fed. I say, I deem
That when the blood of those that led you on,
And of their foremost followers hath flowed,
He will be satiate and stay his hand.

If this to try be your deliberate choice,
I will not say that ye be ill-advised.
How are ye minded? Let your Deacons speak.

(*The people speak in consultation with each other, and with the* DEACONS.)

DEACON OF THE MARINERS.

We of the mariners' craft approve the counsel.

DEACON OF THE CORDWAINERS.

There's nothing better can be done.

DEACON OF THE FULLERS.

Agreed.
Our craft was never forward in the war.

DEACON OF THE WEAVERS.

But, master Philip, said you not three ways
There were to choose of? Tell us what remains.

ARTEVELDE.

You may have patience and expect the close.
If nothing else seem fit, betake yourselves
Unto your churches; at the altar's foot
Kneel down and pray, and make a Christian end,
And God will then have mercy on your souls.
This is the second way.

DEACON OF THE WEAVERS.

And what the third?

ARTEVELDE.

If there be found amongst you men whose blood
Runs not so chilly yet as thus to die,
Then there's this third way open—but not else.
That they whose plight is best and hearts are stout
Be mustered suddenly, equipped and armed;
That with our little left of food and wine
The sumpter beasts be laden for their use;
That then they follow me: to-morrow's eve
Shall find us knocking at the gates of Bruges,
And then we'd strike a stroke for life or death.
This is the third and sole remaining course.
Choose of the three.

MANY VOICES.

Choose for us, Master Philip;
You are more wise than we.

ARTEVELDE.

If by my choice
Ye will abide—a soldier's death for me!

A GREAT MANY VOICES.

To Bruges, to Bruges; a venture forth to Bruges.

ARTEVELDE.

Why yet, then, in our embers there is life!
Let whosoe'er would follow me repair
To the West Port. Five thousand will I choose
From them that come, if there should be so many:
And when night falls, we'll sally from the gates.

MANY CITIZENS AGAIN.

For Bruges! for Bruges! 'tis gallantly resolved.

ARTEVELDE.

Then fare ye well, ye citizens of Ghent!
This is the last time you will see me here,
Unless God prosper me past human hope.
I thank you for the dutiful demeanour
Which never once in any of you all
Have I found wanting, though severely tried
When discipline might seem without reward.
Fortune has not been kind to me, good friends;
But let not that deprive me of your loves,
Or of your good report. Be this the word;
My rule was brief, calamitous—but just.
No glory which a prosperous fortune gilds,
If shorn of this addition, could suffice
To lift my heart so high as it is now.

This is that joy in which my soul is strong,
That there is not a man amongst you all
Who can reproach me that I used my power
To do him an injustice. If there be,
It is not to my knowledge; yet I pray him,
That he will now forgive me, taking note
That I had not to deal with easy times.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Oh, Master Philip, there is none—not one.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Most justly and most wisely you have ruled us.

ARTEVELDE.

I thank you, sirs; farewell to you, once more.
Once more, farewell. If I return to Ghent,
A glory and dominion will be your's
Such as no city since the olden time
Hath been so bold to conquer or to claim.
If I return no more—God's will be done!
To Him and to His providence I leave you.

(*He descends. The people come round him, seizing his hands, and crying confusedly,* 'God bless you, Master Philip! God be with you!')

Nay, press not on me, friends; I see ye weep,
Which ye did never for your past mischances.
But ye shall be disburthen'd of your griefs
The rather than disheartened by these tears;
Or else should I reprove them—so—farewell!

(*He passes through the crowd, which disperses, and the scene closes.*)

SCENE IV.

THE VESTIBULE OF THE CHURCH OF ST. NICHOLAS.

At the extreme end of it, VAN RYK *is seen keeping guard over the door which gives access to the church tower. In front,* CLARA *appears, followed at a little distance by* VAN AESWYN.

CLARA.

Still he pursues me; but I will not bear it.
How now, Sir Squire? whom seek you?

AESWYN.

With your leave,
I have an errand for your private ear.

CLARA.

My private ear! I have no private ear!
My ears will not be private.

AESWYN.

I beseech you
To pardon my presumption.

CLARA.

Nay, go to;
It is not past forgiveness; no, no, no,
I freely pardon you.

AESWYN.

I thank you, madam;
And were I but permitted to speak out
All that he bade me say—

CLARA.

That he! what he?

AESWYN.

The Lord of Arlon, madam.

CLARA.

Lord of what?

AESWYN.

Sir Walter, Lord of Arlon.

CLARA.

Oh! Sir Walter,—
Sir Walter D'Arlon—a good knight, they say:
He sent his service, did he?—a good knight.—
I knew him once—he came to Ghent—oh God!
I'm sick—the air is hot, I think—so hot!
I pray you pardon me—we get no rest
In this beleaguer'd town—no anything—
This is the time of day I use to faint;
But I shall miss to do it for this once.
So please you to proceed.

AESWYN.

There's here a bench;
If you'll be seated: for you look so pale
I fear you're ill.

CLARA.

Oh, never mind the bench;
No, I can stand—I think—well then, I'll sit.
So now, your errand?

AESWYN.

The Lord of Arlon, madam,
Imparted to me that of all the griefs

That Fortune had allotted him, was none
So broke his spirit as the cruel thought
That you in some sort must partake the woes
Of this so suffering city: he could ne'er
Lay lance in rest, or do a feat of arms,
But this reflection stung him to the heart,
And each success in which he might have triumph'd
Was turn'd to bitterness,—seeming nought else
But injury to his love. Thus is he now
A man whose heart resents his handiwork,
And all his pleasure in the war is poisoned.

CLARA.

Alas, poor D'Arlon! but I cannot help him.

AESWYN.

Himself thinks otherwise; he bade me say
That he implores you to fly hence to him.

CLARA.

No, never, never.

AESWYN.

And his lady-aunt,
The prioress, will have you in her care,
Till it shall please you to permit his suit.

Who mounts the merry-go-round with me,
Who mounts the merry-go-round?
'Tis I, I, I,—and now let us see
Who mounts the merry-go-round.

A Barber I,—and well appear'd
My handicraft, for when
A Ghentsman's beard I shortly shear'd,
It never grew again.

Who mounts the merry-go-round with me,
Who mounts the merry-go-round?
'Tis I, I, I,—and a Priest was he
That would mount the merry-go-round.

A Ghentsman of his wounds lay sick,
And shall I be saved? he cried;
I gave him a kick, bade him ask old Nick,
And he should be satisfied.

KROOLKHUYS.

I'faith he sings like a nightingale. No more, thank you,—I cannot—cannot... well, if I must... (*drinks*). 'Tis a charming lullaby, and the sentiment very tender and soothing. Let us all do as we would be done by, God bless us! (*Falls asleep.*)

(*Suddenly is heard from the Market-place a loud cry of* 'To arms! To arms!')

UKENHEIM. (*Starting up and drawing his sword.*)

To arms? what! the men of Ghent come to us? What! the scarecrows from Ghent! To arms! to arms! out and down with them! to arms! to arms!

KROOLKHUYS (*waking*).

Why how is this? the men of Ghent! what ho! give me my coat of proof.

UKENHEIM.

Let cowards stay behind. To arms! to arms!

(*They rush out confusedly.* TACKENHAM *creeps from under the table, where he had remained in a reclining posture*).

TACKENHAM.

To arms! I look upon Father Swillen to be an oracle, and it were to be wished that all men paid the church her dues.

[*Exit.*

SCENE III.

THE PALACE.

THE LORD OF OCCO *and* GILBERT MATTHEW.

GILBERT MATTHEW.

His Highness will be here anon. Sir Guy,
Freely accept the combat for the morrow.
Count on my speed. There's not a man in Bruges
Who has outliv'd the day I wished him dead.
The threads of many destinies I hold,
Unknown to them they bind for life or death,
And I am punctual as the planet stars.
A winter's night, as long as nights are now,
Is worth an age.

OCCO.

One doubt detains me still.
The earl, if ever it were known, would—

GILBERT MATTHEW.

Hark!
'Tis over, that. He loves him now no more.
For every philtre that can make men love,
I know the secret of an antidote.

I've warned him of those private ties in Ghent.
Enough. I've dosed him.

OCCO.

Well, it shall be done.

GILBERT MATTHEW.

I will provide thee hands.

OCCO.

You shall not need.
I have already sent for two tried men,—
Italians; they are practised hands and fit.

GILBERT MATTHEW.

I have you then, 'tis Erclo and Romero.

OCCO.

The same.

Enter the EARL.

EARL.

What shouting's this I hear abroad?

OCCO.

The revellers, my good lord; they pitch the bar,
And shoot with cross-bows for a prize. My lord,
At noon to morrow, if his heart but hold,
I'll meet Sir Walter D'Arlon.

GILBERT MATTHEW.

In good truth
But are these shouts of revel? Hark, again!
They cry, 'to arms.'

EARL.

By heaven I think 'tis that.
And hear ye not the bells? They're ringing backwards.

OCCO.

Tis an alarm.

Enter THE LORD OF ARLON, SIR ROBERT MARESCHAULT *and* OTHERS.

EARL.

Well, D'Arlon, what is this?

D'ARLON.

The men of Ghent, my lord, the men of Ghent.

EARL.

What, here?

D'ARLON.

Two miles aloof they make a stand.

EARL.

What, are they mad?

D'ARLON.

I think not mad, my lord,
But desperate.

EARL.

My friends, 'tis all as one.
Now shall this war be gloriously ended,
And famine, that was tedious, be o'erta'en.
Bring out my banner, summon all to arms,
Then forth and fight them.

GILBERT MATTHEW.

Please you, sir, to say
How many they may number.

SIR ROBERT MARESCHAULT.

At a guess
About five thousand.

GILBERT MATTHEW.

May they move, or stand?

SIR ROBERT MARESCHAULT.

Since they were first descried they have not stirred.

EARL.

Forth with my banner; out with horse and foot.
Sir knights, we muster in the Market-place.
Bring me my armour, ho!

GILBERT MATTHEW.

My lord, one word,
Ere yet the knights depart. These men are few,
But they are desperate; famine-bitten are they,
But alway are the leanest wolves most brave
To break the fold. Sir, let us not be rash;
Our men-at-arms are somewhat flushed with drink,
And may be ill to guide. Sir, think upon it.
Fight them to-morrow. Let them sleep to-night
In winter's lap, beneath the ragged tent
Of a December's sky. When morning breaks
You'll see them lying upon yon hill-side
As dead and sapless as the last month's leaves.
Give them this night.

THE HASE OF FLANDERS.

Nay, nay, they'll think we fear them.

GILBERT MATTHEW.

Think they their will; whate'er they think of that
They shall unthink to-morrow.

EARL.

By my faith
I know not, Gilbert, but thou may'st have reason.
The winter's night is sure to thin their ranks

Of fighting men; and if they're scantly stored
With victual, which is probable to think,
They shall endure it worse.

Enter the MAYOR *in haste.*

MAYOR.

My lord, my lord,
The crafts fly forth by thousands from the gates,
Unordered and unled.

EARL.

Who kept the gates?
How came they open? Walter, haste thee, haste!
And bring the madmen back. [*Exit* D'ARLON.
How came they open?

MAYOR.

A simple mariner avouched, my lord,
That he had heard your Highness's own mouth
Give out the order.

EARL.

Hang the slave! he lied.

MAYOR.

Why so the warders thought, and had not done it,

But that the people, being much inflamed,
Menaced their lives.

Enter A SQUIRE.

SQUIRE.

Sir Walter, sir, sends word
The town is almost emptied. He entreats
Your Highness will not look to bring them back,
Which is past hope, but sound at once to arms,
And send them leaders that are gone unled.

EARL.

Now, Gilbert, we must forth.

GILBERT MATTHEW.

Aye, go we forth.
Fifty to five, we surely must do well,
Though peradventure, for the sparing lives
We might have done more wisely.

EARL.

Sirs, be sudden;
And when you're mounted in the market-place,
I'll give you there your charges. Sound to horse.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IX.

THE MARKET-PLACE OF BRUGES.

In front VAN ARTEVELDE, *with* CLARA *and* D'ARLON. *Next,* UKENHEIM, FRANS ACKERMAN, VAN NUITRE, *and other Leaders. Behind them are crowds of armed Followers and Attendants, bearing torches; of whom some companies march off from time to time under orders from their Captains, and others remain keeping guard over prisoners and spoil.*

ARTEVELDE.

War hath dealt hardly with the noble D'Arlon;
Him gold not ransoms, and to stricter bonds
A captive knight was never yet consigned.
(*Turning to his Followers.*)
Van Muck returns not. Who amongst you all
Hath eye of lynx and leveret's foot to speed
Through all the town with inquisition sure,
And leave no corner of a house unsearched.
Where is Van Ryk?

UKENHEIM.

He left us at the gates.

ARTEVELDE

True, true, despatch'd by me upon an errand;
He will be here anon. Then, Ukenheim,
Go thou, with such assistance as thou wilt,
Upon the quest, through every lane and street.
Take him, if possibly ye can, alive.
Evil and folly hath he wrought against us,
But never treason; he had wrong'd us less
But for the renegades that gave him counsel.
Bring forth the Lord of Occo.

(Occo *is brought forward bound.*)

So, my lord!

Enter VAN MUCK *and his party.*

VAN MUCK.

A prisoner, sir, we bring; 'tis Gilbert Matthew.

ARTEVELDE.

And not the earl?

VAN MUCK.

'Tis said that he's escap'd,
And ta'en the road to Lisle. He lay some space
Hid in a hovel till the search went by,
And then he fled away.

ARTEVELDE.

Long must thou wait,

Earl, ere thou see thy heritage again!
Bring Gilbert Matthew forth.

(He is brought in bound.)

So, Gilbert Matthew!

GILBERT MATTHEW.

Young upstart, what wouldst thou with Gilbert Matthew?

ARTEVELDE.

Be patient, sir; you'll know it. Where art thou,
Frans Ackerman? Ere midnight let me see
A hundred waggons on their way to Ghent,
Loaden with corn and wine. At dawn send forth
To Damme and Sluys, and empty out their stores
For a fresh convoy. Have me men prepared
To ride to Ypres, Courtray, Cassel, Bergues,
To Poperinguen, and to Rousselaere,
And bid the mayor and burghers of each town
Send me its keys.—Well met, bold Van den Bosch!

Enter VAN DEN BOSCH, *with followers.*

Well met at Bruges, my brethren in arms!
As ye were brave, so be ye temperate now.
Let not the small-crafts suffer. Spare their blood,

For they but followed in the train of power,
And many wish'd us in their hearts no ill.
To all shall plunder plentifully flow
Out of the coffers of the rich; but him
That spills a foreigner's or craftsman's blood
I mulct of all his share, and, this night past,
The price (not willingly so long postponed,
But needfully for this tumultuous night)
Of all blood-guiltiness is paid in blood.
Take heed of what I say;—ye ought to know
For good or ill my promises are kept.
The debt of vengeance which is due to Ghent
You shall behold acquitted where you stand.

(*Turning to* OCCO *and* GILBERT MATTHEW.)

Look, Van den Bosch, upon your former friends,
And tell me what's their due.

VAN DEN BOSCH.

In this world, death,
And after that let Satan tend his own.
I should commend their bodies to the rack,
But that I'm loth so long to keep their souls
Out of hell-fire.

OCCO.

Thy heart was ever hard;

But, Artevelde, *thou* wilt not stain thy hands
By killing in cold blood two helpless men!
If thou'rt a soldier, do not such a deed.
Soldiers by soldiers in the field are slain,
Not murder'd in the market-place.

ARTEVELDE.

I grant thee.
And if the name of soldier can be claim'd
By both or one of you, ye shall not die.
Bring forth the friar. (A FRIAR *is brought forward.*)
Save you, holy Father!
Say in the face of these two that stand here,
That which thou said'st to me.

FRIAR.

Sir, it was this:
Here in the hospital expir'd but now
Of many wounds a Florentine, by name
Romero, who, or ere he died, for shrift
Confess'd to me that he received a bribe
From Gilbert Matthew and Sir Guy of Occo,
To kill the Lord of Arlon, for some spite
That each had to him.

OCCO.

Miscreant, he lied!
Whoe'er procured him, it was never I.
Master Van Artevelde, my Lord of Arlon,
Believe not I would sin in such a sort.
Have mercy on a miserable man! (*Falls on his knees.*)
Oh God! there's some mistake, or else he lied.

GILBERT MATTHEW.

How say'st thou that he lied? Sirs, it is true
I with this craven beggarly companion—
Of whose accompliceship to do the deed,
And not the deed itself, I speak with shame—
I with this caitiff truly did conspire,
For good and ample reasons, to remove
Sir Walter D'Arlon from this troublesome world.
Such chances as no prudence could forefend,
Have baulked my purpose, and I go myself.
Wherefore, sirs, God be with you! To the block!
What are ye dreaming of, ye sluggish hinds?

ARTEVELDE (*signs to the Men at Arms, who lead out* GILBERT MATTHEW).

Aye, Gilbert, God forgive thee for thy sins!

Thou steppest statelily the only walk
Thou hast to take upon this solid earth.
Full many a better man less bravely dieth.
Take forth the other too.

OCCO.

Stop: hear me yet.
If through pretext of justice I am doomed,
Some better witness and more credible
Than Gilbert or Romero should depose
To guilt their spite would falsely fix upon me.

Enter VAN RYK, *conducting* ADRIANA, *who throws herself into the arms of* VAN ARTEVELDE. *He supports her, and addresses himself to* OCCO.

ARTEVELDE.

Lo! here a witness! look upon this face,
And bid death welcome. Lead him to the block.

ADRIANA.

Oh, spare him; speak not now of shedding blood,
Now, in this hour of happiness! Oh, spare him!
Vengeance is God's, whose function take not thou!
Relent, Van Artevelde, and spare his life.

ARTEVELDE.

Not though an angel plead. Vengeance is God's;
But God doth oftentimes dispense it here
By human ministration. To my hands
He render'd victory this eventful day
For uses higher than my happiness.
Let Flanders judge me from my deeds to-night,
That I from this time forth will thus proceed,
Justice with mercy tempering where I may:
But executing always. Lead him out.

(OCCO *is led out.*)

Now, Adriana, I am wholly thine.

(*The curtain falls.*)

END OF THE FIRST PART.

The curtain falls upon the fancied stage,
The tale half told: here rest thee, reader sage;
Pause here and trim thine intellectual light,
Which, more than mine, shall make my meanings bright.
That ancient writer whose romantic heart
Lov'd war in every shape,—its pride, its art,
Its shows, appurtenance,—whose page is still
The theatre of war, turn where we will,—
That old historian, of whose truthful text
I dog the heels,—me whither leads he next?
To dark descents he guides me; sad and stern,
Him following forth, the lesson that I learn;
That in the shocks of powers so wild and rude,
Success but signifies vicissitude;
That of that man who seeks a sovran sphere,
The triumph is the trial most severe.
And yet in times so stormy, in a land
Where virtue's self held forth a bloody hand
To greet armed justice,—in such times as these
Still woman's love could find the way to please.

Thus in the tissue of my tale, herein
By records not unvouched, again I spin,
As heretofore, an interwoven thread
Of feminine affection fancy-fed.

—Rest thee a space: or if thou lov'st to hear
A soft pulsation in thine easy ear,
Turn thou the page, and let thy senses drink
A lay that shall not trouble thee to think.
Quitting the heroine of the past, thou'lt see
In this prefigured her that is to be.
And find what life was hers before the date
That with the Fleming's fortunes linked her fate.
This sang she to herself one summer's eve,
A recreant from festivities that grieve
The heart not festive; stealing to her bower,
With this she whiled away the lonely evening hour.

THE LAY OF ELENA.

He asked me had I yet forgot
  The mountains of my native land?
I sought an answer, but had not
  The words at my command.
They would not come, and it was better so,
For had I uttered aught, my tears I know
Had started at the word as free to flow.

But I can answer when there's none that hears;
And now if I should weep, none sees my tears;
And in my soul the voice is rising strong,
That speaks in solitude,—the voice of song.

Yes, I remember well
  The land of many hues,
Whose charms what praise can tell,
  Whose praise what heart refuse?
Sublime, but neither bleak nor bare,
Nor misty, are the mountains there,—
Softly sublime, profusely fair!

Up to their summits clothed in green,
And fruitful as the vales between,
They lightly rise,
And scale the skies,
And groves and gardens still abound;
For where no shoot
Could else take root,
The peaks are shelved and terraced round;
Earthward appear, in mingled growth,
The mulberry and maize,—above
The trellised vine extends to both
The leafy shade they love.
Looks out the white-walled cottage here,
The lowly chapel rises near;
Far down the foot must roam to reach
The lovely lake and bending beach;
Whilst chestnut green and olive grey
Chequer the steep and winding way.

A bark is launched on Como's lake,
A maiden sits abaft;
A little sail is loosed to take
The night wind's breath, and waft

The maiden and her bark away,
Across the lake and up the bay.
And what doth there that lady fair,
Upon the wavelet tossed?
Before her shines the evening star,
Behind her in the woods afar
The castle lights are lost.
What doth she there? The evening air
Lifts her locks, and her neck is bare;
And the dews, that now are falling fast,
May work her harm, or a rougher blast
May come from yonder cloud,
And that her bark might scarce sustain,
So slightly built,—and why remain,
And would she be allowed
To brave the wind and sit in the dew
At night on the lake, if her mother knew?

Her mother sixteen years before
The burthen of the baby bore;
And though brought forth in joy, the day
So joyful, she was wont to say,

In taking count of after years,
Gave birth to fewer hopes than fears.
For seldom smiled
The serious child,
And as she passed from childhood, grew
More far-between those smiles, and few,
More sad and wild.
And though she loved her father well,
And though she loved her mother more,
Upon her heart a sorrow fell,
And sapped it to the core.
And in her father's castle, nought
She ever found of what she sought,
And all her pleasure was to roam
Among the mountains far from home,
And through thick woods, and wheresoe'er
She saddest felt, to sojourn there;
And oh! she loved to linger afloat
On the lonely lake in the little boat.

It was not for the forms,—though fair,
Though grand they were beyond compare,—

It was not only for the forms
Of hills in sunshine or in storms,
Or only unrestrained to look
On wood and lake, that she forsook
By day or night
Her home, and far
Wandered by light
Of sun or star.
It was to feel her fancy free,
Free in a world without an end,
With ears to hear, and eyes to see,
And heart to apprehend.
It was to leave the earth behind,
And rove with liberated mind,
As fancy led, or choice, or chance,
Through wildered regions of romance.
And many a castle would she build;
And all around the woods were filled
With knights and squires that rode amain,
With ladies saved and giants slain;
And as some contest wavered, came,
With eye of fire and breath of flame,

A dragon that in cave profound
Had had his dwelling underground;
And he had closed the dubious fight,
But that, behold! there came in sight
A hippogriff, that wheeled his flight
Far in the sky, then swooping low,
Brings to the field a fresher foe:
Dismayed by this diversion, fly
The dragon and his dear ally;
And now the victor knight unties
The prisoner, his unhoped-for prize,
And lo! a beauteous maid is she,
Whom they, in their unrighteous guise,
Had fastened naked to a tree!

Much dreaming these, yet was she much awake
To portions of things earthly, for the sake
Whereof, as with a charm, away would flit
The phantoms, and the fever intermit.
Whatso' of earthly things presents a face
Of outward beauty, or a form of grace,
Might not escape her, hidden though it were
From courtly cognisance; 'twas not with her

As with the tribe who see not nature's boons
Save by the festal lights of gay saloons;
Beauty in plain attire her heart could fill—
Yea, though in beggary, 'twas beauty still.
Devoted thus to what was fair to sight,
She loved too little else, nor this aright,
And many disappointments could not cure
This born obliquity, or break the lure
Which this strong passion spread: she grew not wise,
Nor grows: experience with a world of sighs
Purchased, and tears and heart-break have been hers,
And taught her nothing: where she erred she errs.

Be it avowed, when all is said,
She trod the path the many tread;—
She loved too soon in life; her dawn
Was bright with sunbeams, whence is drawn
A sure prognostic that the day
Will not unclouded pass away.
Too young she loved, and he on whom
Her first love lighted, in the bloom
Of boyhood was, and so was graced
With all that earliest runs to waste.

Intelligent, loquacious, mild,
Yet gay and sportive as a child,
With feelings light and quick, that came
And went, like flickerings of flame;
A soft demeanour, and a mind
Bright and abundant in its kind,
That, playing on the surface, made
A rapid change of light and shade,
Or if a darker hour perforce
At times o'ertook him in his course,
Still sparkling thick like glowworms showed
Life was to him a summer's road,—
Such was the youth to whom a love
For grace and beauty far above
Their due deserts, betray'd a heart
Which might have else performed a prouder part.

First love the world is wont to call
The passion which was now her all.
So be it called; but be it known
The feeling which possessed her now
Was novel in degree alone;

Love early marked her for his own ;
Soon as the winds of Heaven had blown
Upon her, had the seed been sown
In soil which needed not the plough ;
And passion with her growth had grown,
And strengthened with her strength, and how
Could love be new, unless in name,
Degree, and singleness of aim ?
A tenderness had filled her mind
Pervasive, viewless, undefined ;—
As keeps the subtle fluid oft
Its secret, gathering in the soft
And sultry air, till felt at length
In all its desolating strength,
So silent, so devoid of dread,
Her objectless affections spread ;
Not wholly unemployed, but squandered
At large where'er her fancy wandered ;
Till one attraction, one desire
Concentred all the scattered fire ;
It broke, it burst, it blazed amain,
It flashed its light o'er hill and plain,

O'er Earth below and Heaven above,—
And then it took the name of love.

How fared that love? the tale so old,
So common, needs it to be told?
Bellagio's woods, ye saw it through
From first accost to last adieu;
Its changes, seasons, you can tell,—
At least you typify them well.
First came the genial, hopeful Spring,
With bursting buds and birds that sing,
And fast though fitful progress made
To brighter suns and broader shade.
Those brighter suns, that broader shade,
They came, and richly then array'd
Was bough and sward, and all below
Gladdened by Summer's equal glow.
What next? a change is slowly seen,
And deepeneth day by day
The darker, soberer, sadder green
Prevenient to decay.
Yet still at times through that green gloom,
As sudden gusts might make them room,

And lift the spray so light,
The berries of the mountain-ash,
Arching the torrent's foam and flash,
Waved gladly into sight.
But rare those short-lived gleamings grew,
And wore the woods a sicklier hue;
Destruction now his phalanx forms
'Mid wailing winds and gathering storms;
And last comes Winter's withering breath,
Keen as desertion, cold—cold as the hand of death!

Is the tale told? too well, alas!
Is pictured here what came to pass.
So long as light affections played
Around their path, he loved the maid;
Loved in half gay, half tender mood,
By passion touched, but not subdued;
Laughed at the flame he felt or lit;
Replied to tenderness with wit;
Sometimes when passion brightlier burned,
Its tokens eagerly returned,

Then calm, supine, but pleased no less,
Softly sustained each soft caress.
She, watching with delight the while
His half-closed eyes and gradual smile,
(Slow pleasure's smile, how far more worth,
More beautiful than smiles of mirth!)
Seemed to herself when back she cast
A hurried look upon the past,
As changed from what she then had been,
As was the moon, who having run
Her orbit through since this begun,
Now shone 'apparent Queen.'
How dim a world, how blank a waste,
A shadowy orb how faintly traced,
Her crescent fancy first embraced!
How fair an orb, a world how bright,
How filled with glory and with light
Had now revealed itself to sight!
A glory of her essence grown,
A light incorporate with her own!

Forth from such paradise of bliss
Open the way and easy is,

Like that renowned of old;
And easier than the most was this,
For they were sorted more amiss
Than outward things foretold.
The goddess, that with cruel mirth
The daughters and the sons of earth
Mismatches, hath a cunning eye
In twisting of a treacherous tie;
Nor is she backward to perceive
That loftier minds to lower cleave
With ampler love (as that which flows
From a rich source) than these to those;
For still the source, not object, gives
The daily food whereon love lives.
The well-spring of his love was poor
Compared to her's; his gifts were fewer;
The total light that was in him
Before a spark of her's grew dim;
Too high, too grave, too large, too deep,
Her love could neither laugh nor sleep;
And thus it tired him; his desire
Was for a less consuming fire:

He wished that she should love him well,
Not wildly; wished her passion's spell
To charm her heart, but leave her fancy free;
To quicken converse, not to quell;
He granted her to sigh, for so could he;
But when she wept, why should it be?
'Twas irksome, for it stole away
The joy of his love-holiday.
Bred of such uncongenial mood
At length would some dim doubt intrude
If what he felt, so far below
Her passion's pitch, were love or no.
With that the common day-light's beam
Broke in upon his morning dream,
And as that common day advanced
His heart was wholly unentranced.

What followed was not good to do,
Nor is it good to tell;
The anguish of that worst adieu
Which parts with love and honour too,
Abides not,—so far well.

The human heart can not sustain
Prolonged inalterable pain,
And not till reason cease to reign
Will nature want some moments brief
Of other moods to mix with grief;
Such and so hard to be destroyed
That vigour which abhors a void,
And in the midst of all distress,
Such nature's need for happiness!
And when she rallied thus, more high
Her spirits ran, she knew not why,
Than was their wont in times than these
Less troubled, with a heart at ease.
So meet extremes; so joy's rebound
Is highest from the hollowest ground;
So vessels with the storm that strive
Pitch higher as they deeplier dive.

Well had it been if she had curbed
These transports of a mind disturbed;
For grief is then the worst of foes
When, all intolerant of repose,
It sends the heart abroad to seek
From weak recoils exemptions weak;

After false gods to go astray,
Deck altars vile with garlands gay,
And place a painted form of stone
On Passion's abdicated throne.

Till then her heart was as a mound,
Or simple plot of garden ground
Far in a forest wild,
Where many a seedling had been sown,
And many a bright-eyed floweret grown
To please a favourite child.
Delighted was the child to call
The plot of garden-ground her own;
Delighted was she at the fall
Of evening mild when shadows tall
Cross-barred the mound and cottage wall,
To linger there alone.
Nor seemed the garden flowers less fair,
Nor loved she less to linger there,
When glistened in the morning dew
Each lip of red and eye of blue;
And when the sun too brightly burned
Towards the forest's verge she turned,

Where stretched away from glade to glade
A green interminable shade;
And in the skirts thereof a bower
Was built with many a creeping flower,
For shelter at the noon-tide hour;
And from the forest walks was heard
The voice of many a singing bird,
With murmurs of the cushat-dove,
That tell the secret of her love:
And pleasant therefore all day long,
From earliest dawn to even-song,—
Supremely pleasant was this wild
Sweet garden to the woodsman's child.—
The whirlwind came with fire and flood
And smote the garden in the wood;
All that was formed to give delight
Destruction levelled in a night;
The morning broke, the child awoke,
And when she saw what sudden stroke
The garden which she loved had swept
To ruin, she sat down and wept.
Her grief was great, but it had vent;
Its force, not spar'd, was sooner spent;

And she bethought her to repair
The garden which had been so fair.
Then roamed she through the forest walks,
Cropping the wild flowers by their stalks,
And divers full-blown blossoms gay
She gathered, and in fair array
Disposed, and stuck them in the mound
Which had been once her garden ground.
They seemed to flourish for awhile,
A moment's space she seemed to smile;
But brief the bloom, and vain the toil,
They were not native to the soil.

That other child, beneath whose zone
Were passions fearfully full-grown,—
She too essayed to deck the waste
Where love had grown, which love had graced,
With false adornments, flowers not fruit,
Fast-fading flowers, that strike not root,—
With pleasures alien to her breast,
That bloom but briefly at the best,

The world's sad substitutes for joys
To minds that lose their equipoise.

On Como's lake the evening star
Is trembling as before;
An azure flood, a golden bar,
There as they were before they are,
But she that loved them—she is far,
Far from her native shore.
No more is seen her slender boat
Upon the star-lit lake afloat,
With oar or sail at large to rove,
Or tethered in its wooded cove
Mid gentle waves that sport around,
And rock it with a gurgling sound.
Keel up, it rots upon the strand,
Its gunwale sunken in the sand,
Where suns and tempests warped and shrank
Each shattered rib and riven plank.
Never again that land-wrecked craft
Shall feel the billow boom abaft;
Never, when springs the freshening gale,
Take life again from oar or sail;

Nor shall the freight that once it bore
Again be seen on lake or shore.

A foreign land is now her choice,
A foreign sky above her,
And unfamiliar is each voice
Of those that say they love her.
A prince's palace is her home,
And marble floor and gilded dome,
Where festive myriads nightly meet,
Quick echoes of her steps repeat.
And she is gay at times, and light
From her makes many faces bright;
And circling flatterers hem her in
Assiduous each a word to win,
And smooth as mirrors each the while
Reflects and multiplies her smile.
But fitful were her smiles, nor long
She cast them to that courtly throng;
And should the sound of music fall
Upon her ear in that high hall,
The smile was gone, the eye that shone
So brightly, would be dimmed anon,

And objectless would then appear
As stretched to check the starting tear.
The chords within responsive rung,
For music spoke her native tongue.

And then the gay and glittering crowd
Is heard not, laugh they e'er so loud;
Nor then is seen the simpering row
Of flatterers, bend they e'er so low;
For there before her, where she stands,
The mountains rise, the lake expands;
Around the terraced summit twines
The leafy coronal of vines;
Within the watery mirror deep
Nature's calm converse lies asleep;
Above she sees the sky's blue glow,
The forest's varied green below,
And far its vaulted vistas through
A distant grove of darker hue,
Where mounting high from clumps of oak
Curls lightly up the thin gray smoke;
And o'er the boughs that over-bower

The crag, a castle's turrets tower—
An eastern casement mantled o'er
With ivy flashes back the gleam
Of sun-rise—it was there of yore
She sate to see that sun-rise pour
Its splendour round—she sees no more,
For tears disperse the dream.

Thus seized and speechless had she stood,
Surveying mountain, lake, and wood,
When to her ear came that demand
Had she forgot her native land?
'Twas but a voice within replied
She had forgotten all beside.
For words are weak and most to seek
When wanted fifty-fold,
And then if silence will not speak,
Or trembling lip and changing cheek,
There's nothing told.
But could she have revealed to him
Who questioned thus, the vision bright,
That ere his words were said grew dim

And vanished from her sight,
Easy the answer were to know
And plain to understand,—
That mind and memory both must fail,
And life itself must slacken sail,
And thought its functions must forego,
And fancy lose its latest glow,
Or ere that land
Could pictured be less bright and fair
To her whose home and heart are there!
That land the loveliest that eye can see
The stranger ne'er forgets, then how should she?

—Cease the soft sounds, the mellow voice is mute,
And quivers to a close that plaintive lady's lute.—
Pass we to matters masculine; to strains
Where weightier themes may pay the reader's pains.
Again disclose we counsels of the wise,
Deeds of the warlike:—let the Curtain rise.

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